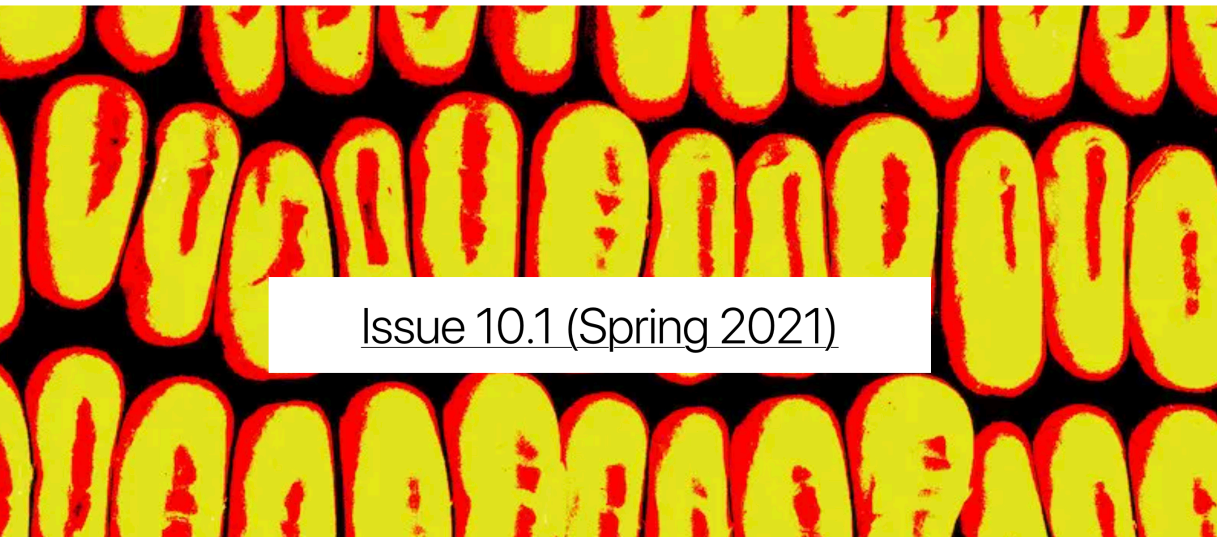


Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

Lateral

Journal of the Cultural Studies Association

Editors' Introduction: A Decade of Open Access in Cultural Studies

by Robert F. Carley, Stefanie A. Jones, Eero Laine and Chris Alen Sula

| Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT This issue marks the tenth year of publishing *Lateral*. We reflect here on this milestone and highlight work in the current issue, including a new forum on Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA) and a special section on Cripistemologies of Crisis: Emergent Knowledges for the Present. We discuss several of these pieces in relationship to ongoing violence in Israel and attacks in the United States against "critical race theory" and conclude with calls for open access scholarship.

KEYWORDS critical race theory, cultural studies, disability, open access, Palestine, race

We are pleased to publish the first issue of the tenth volume of *Lateral*—one of the largest issues the journal has ever published. In the decade since the journal's inception, *Lateral* has published timely and important scholarship, and this issue is no exception. The groundbreaking work of the early issues in establishing a digital platform for cultural studies scholarship and activism has developed and deepened through recent strides in engaged and accessible scholarship.

Extending Work on Race and Racism

This spring, we published Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA) < https://csalateral.org/archive/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/> , edited and introduced < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/introduction-el-zein/> by Rayya El Zein. Like other *Lateral* forums, this work is imagined as a tool for conversation, education, and agitation. The forum features an outstanding collection of reflections on white supremacy, colonialism, and colorism in the region, and, importantly, this forum had an immediate impact on the discourse around and the practice of blackface. During Nowruz, the Persian new year celebration, Tehran's deputy mayor suspended blackface performances, citing Beeta Baghoolizadeh's contribution to the *Lateral* forum: "The Myths of Haji Firuz: The Racist Contours of the Iranian Minstrel." < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/myths-haji-firuz-racist-contours-iranian-minstrel-baghoolizadeh/> [1] In an effort to extend the reach of this

scholarship beyond English-speaking readers, we were pleased to also publish a Persian-langauge version < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/myths-haji-firuz-racist-contours-iranian-minstrel-baghoolizadeh/fa/> of this article, translated by Elahe Nezhadhossein. Also included in the forum are Parisa Vaziri's "Thaumaturgic, Cartoon Blackface," < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/thaumaturgic-cartoon-blackface-vaziri/> which explores the narratives of blackface in Persian comics, and Bam Willoughby's "Opposing A Spectacle of Blackness: *Arap Baci*, *Baci Kalfa*, *Dadi*, and the Invention of African Presence in Turkey," < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/opposing-spectacle-blackness-arap-baci-kalfa-dad-african-presence-turkey-willoughby/> which traces the combined use of blackface-like and drag-like techniques in three figures within Turkish popular culture.

Two pieces in the forum consider colonial histories with respect to race and racism. "'Incommensurate Ontologies'? Anti-Black Racism and the Question of Islam in French Algeria" < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/> by Muriam Haleh Davis looks at race, religion, and colonial history, drawing on Frantz Fanon's analysis of anti-Black racism in mainland France to understand the dynamics of settler colonialism in Algeria. Leila Tayeb's "What is Whiteness in North Africa?" < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/whiteness-in-north-africa-tayeb/> takes up the legal, colonial, and state histories under and through which racialization proceeded in North and Saharan Africa since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

Several authors in the forum engage questions of racecraft in various sites, including Shayna Silverstein and Darci Sprengel's "An (Un)Marked Foreigner: Race-Making in Egyptian, Syrian, and German Popular Cultures Black," < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/unmarked-foreigner-race-egyptian-syrian-german-popular-cultures-silverstein-sprengel/> which presents two ethnographic studies: how Syrian musicians negotiate musical multiculturalism as they integrate into German society and how independent musicians in Egypt navigate the racialized entanglements of national and international security logics that privilege Western foreigners. In "On Blackness and the Nation in Arabic Hip Hop: Case Studies from Lebanon and Libya," < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/blackness-nation-arabic-hip-hop-lebanon-libya-nickell-benkato/> Chris Nickell and Adam Benkato explore anti-Blackness in Arabic hip hop through discussions of a rap battle in Beirut, Lebanon and music videos from Benghazi, Libya, offering glimpse at "the discursive level at which racecraft functions." Sascha Crasnow's "Co-option and Erasure: Mizrahi Culture in Israel" < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/cooption-erasure-mizrahi-culture-israel-crasnow/> explores racism and white supremacy through the privileging of Ashkenazi Jews in Israeli mainstream culture and the co-option of Mizrahi and Palestinian cultural elements. Greg Burris theorizes Israeli whiteness with respect to African migrants in "Black Skin, White Cameras: African Asylum-Seekers in Israeli Documentary Film." < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/black-skin-white-cameras-african-asylum-seekers-israeli-documentary-film-burris/>

The relevance of this work cannot be understated amidst ongoing violence in the settler colonial state of Israel. We join many academics, departments, societies, and publishers[2] in supporting Palestinian rights and calling for an end to Israel's regime of occupation, apartheid, and oppression over the Palestinian people. Work in the forum and elsewhere in the journal[3] furthers the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) < https://bdsmovement.net/academic-boycott> denunciation of propaganda initiatives that promote Israel or whitewash its violations of international law. We welcome current and future scholarship that exposes this violence, builds support for Palestinian rights, and highlights Palestinian culture and scholarship.

In presenting a forum on race, we must also note ongoing attacks on "critical race theory" in the United States, which have increased sharply over the past two months[4] and created a chilling effect in higher education, even beyond the borders of the states in which legislators have attempted to censor public schools from teaching the history of racism.[5] Notably, pressure from conservatives has led the University of North Carolina Board of Trustees to withhold approval of tenure for Nikole Hannah-Jones,[6] Knight Chair in Race and Investigative Journalism and creator of The 1619 Project published by *The New York Times*, which "aims to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the very center of the United States' national narrative."[7]

These assaults on academic freedom underscore the growing importance of venues, including open access journals, that are independent of large-scale power structures that influence knowledge production and dissemination. Relatedly, the acquisition of ProQuest by Clarivate Analytics now places unprecedented power in the hands of single company, which may "prioritize profit over knowledge, negatively impacting the authority, integrity and independence of research."[8] In supporting open access, we are mindful not only of digital access, but also accessibility in the broadest sense. Imperialism and racial capitalism are enacted through the body, as states and extra-state actors target populations for injury and premature death in ways that both produce and exceed boundaries of "disability" as well as of race and class.[9] Attacks on academic freedom and the ongoing privatization of scholarship are struggles over capital, one front in the concerted, racially-hierarchical production of vulnerability, precarity, debility, and death. "Accessibility," broadly conceived, must also indicate interventions against the "inaccessibility" of these regimes of structured and targeted violence.

Cripistemologies of Crisis

Grappling head-on with the ableist violences of racial capitalism, specifically under everyday conditions of emergency, this issue features Theodora Danylevich and Alyson Patsavas's special section, Cripistemologies of Crisis: Emergent Knowledges for the Present < https://csalateral.org/archive/section/cripistemologies-of-crisis/> . This prescient work, underway before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, centers on disability's epistemological insights for understanding, surviving, and transforming crisis. In the introduction < https://csalateral.org/section/cripistemologies-of-crisis/introduction-emergent-knowledges-for-the-present-danylevich-patsavas/> to this section, Danylevich and Patsavas build from the example of the organized abandonment of the 2019 California power shut-offs to argue for the importance of crip interventions that both interrupt produced vulnerabilities and center the survival of the vulnerable. Through their

introduction, Danylevich and Patsavas outline the urgency of uplifting and learning from disabled peoples' knowledge of how to survive crisis and of the nature of "crisis" itself, as well as the urgency of transforming the lived conditions of precarity. The section's explorations of crip time and cripistemologies illuminate ways of being in and thinking of the world that are essential to our collective survival of the proliferating crises of the contemporary world.

Angela Carter continues the special section in "When Silence Said Everything: Reconceptualizing Trauma Through Critical Disability Studies." < https://csalateral.org/section/cripistemologies-of-crisis/when-silence-said-everything-reconceptualizing-trauma-through-critical-disability-studies-carter/> Through a critical disability studies-informed reading and reflective interpretation of X González's 2018 "March For Our Lives" speech, the article explores "trauma's attributes of instability." Carter offers a political/relational model as a modus by which trauma may become a site of collective reimagining.

Alyson K. Spurgas works against narratives of trauma's unnarratability to amplify experiences of feminized trauma specifically in "Solidarity in Falling Apart: Toward a Crip, Collectivist, and Justice-Seeking Theory of Feminine Fracture." < https://csalateral.org/section/cripistemologies-of-crisis/solidarity-falling-apart-toward-crip-collectivist-justice-theory-feminine-fracture-spurgas/> The article outlines how psychology's use of dissociation delimits trauma through/to the experiences and diagnoses of white, wealthy, cis-normative, and heteronormative femininity. Instead, Spurgas advocates for a *dissociative-adjacent* focus through examples of the chronic, mundane, and accumulative experiences of trauma shaped by structures such as anti-Black racism, immigrant detention, and neoliberal capitalism. From this re-framing of trauma, Spurgas explores how "feminine fracturing and falling apart" can function as practice of radical, collective care for those who live with raced, classed, and gendered trauma.

Jess Whatcott's "Crip Collectivity Beyond Neoliberalism in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*" < https://csalateral.org/section/cripistemologies-of-crisis/crip-collectivity-beyond-neoliberalism-octavia-butler-parable-of-the-sower-whatcott/> also engages collectivity. With attention to cripistemologies in science/speculative fiction, Whatcott joins Pickens's and Shalk's analyses of *Parable of the Sower* as a Black feminist theory of disability and madness. Whatcott's reading of the novel explores and illuminates Butler's theorization of the relationship between political economy and disability, and highlights how *Parable of the Sower* is engaged by activists and organizers actively building collective futures.

As a continuation of this special section, Danylevich and Patsavas call for contributions < https://csalateral.org/upcoming/#cripistemologies> to an archive or tapestry of "evidence" of ephemeral and everyday modes of living and surviving during crises, particularly the current pandemic. In keeping with *Lateral*'s expansive and flexible submission scope, they specifically solicit a range of contributions, including mementos, dreams, reflections, poetry, and essays, by July 31, 2021.

Original Articles

This issue features several original articles that break new ground in the theory and practice of cultural studies across various locations and times.

In our lead article, Richard Simpson examines "the emergence of the cruise ship city as inseparable from the onset of globalized urbanization" and the necessity of a critical pedagogy that can respond and reshape regional understandings and resistances. Simpson's "Toward an Alaskan Critical Regionalist Pedagogy: Mapping the Cruise Ship Industry through Visual Spatial Tactics" < https://csalateral.org/issue/10-1/toward-alaskan-critical-regionalist-pedagogy-mapping-cruise-ship-industry-visual-spatial-tactics-simpson/> insightfully reads globalizing capital through particular zones of regionality from the port to the city to the state, while questioning the ways that cultural imaginaries are built and sustained through pedagogical methods. Simpson describes his own classroom research project with students and unpacks the possibilities of mapping and countermapping as praxis.

In "'A Program of Complete Disorder': The Black Iconoclasm Within Fanonian Thought," < https://csalateral.org/issue/10-1/a-program-of-complete-disorder-black-iconoclasm-fanonian-thought-athanasopoulos/> Charles Athansopoulos takes up Wilderson's and Sexton's afropessimisms to challenge Taussig's critique of iconoclasms and to expand and explode Fanonian humanisms. Athanasopoulos argues that Fanon's "un programme de désordre absolu" is a "Black iconoclasm" that uniquely remains anti-icon. As a means of bringing "ending the world into the realm of everyday practice" through the "ritual orientation of chaos" of Fanon's theory, Athanasopoulos strives to hold the reader in the dialectical liminal of and against the promise of any *particular* agenda for redemption in the anti-Black world.

Academic hoaxing has, since at least the well-known Sokal Affair, often involved targeting sub-fields engaged in cultural inquiry or those that explore controversial questions (pertaining to, for example, sexuality and gender studies), or, finally, that pursue highly-specialized and sophisticated forms of theoretical research and production. In this issue, Ian Reilly offers a systematic and comprehensive study of academic hoaxing in his article, "Airing Grievances: Academic Hoaxing and the Performance of Boundary Work." < https://csalateral.org/issue/10-1/airing-grievances-academic-hoaxing-performance-boundary-work-reilly/> Through an examination of the recent and incendiary 2018 "grievance studies" hoax, Reilly shows how hoaxing performs an institutional critique that pertains to the production, verification, and dissemination of knowledge. Taking a broader and more historical view of recent hoaxes in the media and in academia, Reilly's work situates the 2018 hoax with other contemporary examples and illustrates the different kinds of boundary work that are performed and enacted by academics to shed light on the conflicting ways knowledge production and academic labour are currently contextualized and understood.

Steff Nellis's "Enacting Law: The Dramaturgy of the Courtroom on the Contemporary Stage" < https://csalateral.org/issue/10-1/enacting-law-dramaturgy-courtroom-contemporary-stage-nellis/> points us toward the dramaturgical possibilities of "how contemporary theatrical tribunals could contribute to the enlargement of public knowledge on historical and contemporary examples of injustice, and whether they could obtain effective changes in our societies." In doing so, Nellis examines the tribunal as a legal and dramatic genre, asking how justice is not only enacted and re-enacted, but how pre-enactments can shape and reshape systems and perceptions. The article imbricates the legal with the theatrical and asks us to imagine the ways the two function both onstage and in the courtroom.

In "On Remembering *Le premier festival culturel panafricain d'Alger* 1969: An Assembled Interview" < https://csalateral.org/issue/10-1/remembering-le-premier-festival-culturel-panafricain-d-alger-1969-interview-kimmel/> Anna Kimmel speaks with Elaine Mokhtefi, tracing her memories and impressions of the 1969 event. Kimmel's interview with Mokhtefi is augmented and structured through an interweaving of archival, theoretical, and scholarly materials. The work thus offers a new look back at the festival and its lasting cultural importance while enacting a cultural materialist historiography.

Finally, we continue to expand the Years in Cultural Studies timeline < https://csalateral.org/years> with Sebastiaan Gorissen's "1986—The Marxist Disciplining of the Cultural Studies Project." < https://csalateral.org/section/years-in-cultural-studies/1986-marxist-disciplining-cultural-studies-gorissen/> Gorissen approaches this year as the moment where cultural studies—and what, in hindsight, has been dubbed post-Marxist (more specifically, post-Gramscian) approaches—begins to move past the structural Marxism inaugurated by Louis Althusser. By engaging with Althusser's conception of ideology and agency both Stuart Hall and, additionally, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, make their own moves to rethink the role that class and agency play in culture, ideology theory, and ideology critique. Gorissen argues that cultural studies' grappling with Althusser and, additionally, that the theoretical implications of cultural studies and related neo-Gramscian approaches to culture and power remain a core methodological and theoretical issue for cultural studies today.

Calls for Papers

In addition to the call for Crip Pandemic Life: A Tapestry < https://csalateral.org/upcoming/#cripistemologies> , two other special calls close at the end of July.

The Civic Paths Group < https://civicpaths.uscannenberg.org/> at the University of Southern California invites practitioners, artists, community leaders, scholars, and others who want to share their lived and observed experiences with baking, cooking, and eating as a shared, emotional, critical, challenging, creative, civic, even nostalgic experience to submit their work to a new forum Feeding the Civic Imagination! Proposals describing experiences, case studies, annotated recipes, or critical short pieces that provoke thought and reflection are due by July 30, 2021 via instructions at https://csalateral.org/upcoming/#food < https://csalateral.org/upcoming/#food> .

Finally, in reflecting on this decennial milestone for the journal, we began to think about moments that punctuate the history of cultural studies—and the important gaps between them. An interregnum is most often associated with general uncertainty, a lack of collective political will, and an opaque horizon concealing abysmal futures. Equally, an interregnum can offer radically new conditions of possibility. The editorial team at *Lateral* seeks contributions for an edited volume that trace a genealogy of the recent past to help analyze the present and point toward a future that may or may not arrive. We seek contributions that assume a strategic posture and that consider the interregnum as it might be experienced from various social positions and sites around the world. We welcome contributors from various theoretical approaches, fields, and disciplines, whether they be humanistic, social-scientific, or, at times, outside of liberal arts proper. In addressing this call, some may find evidence or symptoms of the interregnum in political

unrest, electoral politics, leftist and populist movements, emergent economic models, and new platforms—among other regimes of order—while others may look to literature, arts, film, music, or other cultural artifacts. Abstract proposals are due by July 31, 2021; full details of the call are available at https://csalateral.org/cfp-cultural-studies-in-the-interregnum < https://csalateral.org/cfp-cultural-studies-in-the-interregnum/> .

Notes

1. M. R. Javadi Yeganeh, Twitter post, March 23, 2021, 1:17 a.m., https://twitter.com/javadimr/status/1374228879552942082 < https://twitter.com/javadimr/status/1374228879552942082> . The tweet was one among many posted in part to the ongoing work of The Collective for Black Iranians (https://twitter.com/BlackIranians < https://twitter.com/BlackIranians>). See also: Javadi Yeganeh, Twitter post, March 22, 2021, 11:58 a.m., https://twitter.com/javadimr/status/1374027827012632581 < https://twitter.com/javadimr/status/1374027827012632581> .

2. For an overview, see Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), "In Unprecedented Numbers, University Departments and Scholars Urge End To Israeli Apartheid," *Boycott, Divesement, Sanctions (BDS) Movement*, May 26, 2021 https://bdsmovement.net/news/unprecedented-numbers-university-departments-and-scholars-urge-end-israeli-apartheid < https://bdsmovement.net/news/unprecedented-numbers-university-departments-and-scholars-urge-end-israeli-apartheid> .

3. "Keyword: Palestine," *Lateral*, https://csalateral.org/keyword/palestine < https://csalateral.org/keyword/palestine> .

4. Kevin Reuning, Twitter post, June 5, 2021, 9:20 a.m., https://twitter.com/KevinReuning/status/1401166962575749123 < https://twitter.com/KevinReuning/status/1401166962575749123> .

5. Len Gutkin, "The Review: Critical Race Theory Redux," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 7, 2021, https://www.chronicle.com/newsletter/chronicle-review/2021-06-07 < https://www.chronicle.com/newsletter/chronicle-review/2021-06-07> .

6. Joe Killian and Kyle Ingram, "After Conservative Criticism, UNC Backs down from Offering Acclaimed Journalist Tenured Position," *NC Policy Watch*, May 19, 2021, https://www.ncpolicywatch.com/2021/05/19/pw-special-report-after-conservative-criticism-unc-backs-down-from-offering-acclaimed-journalist-a-tenured-position/ < https://www.ncpolicywatch.com/2021/05/19/pw-special-report-after-conservative-criticism-unc-backs-down-from-offering-acclaimed-journalist-a-tenured-position//> .

7. "The 1619 Project," *The New York Times*, August 14, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html < https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html> .

8. Kaitlin Thaney, "Take Action to Stop the Lock up of Research and Learning," *Invest in Open Infrastructure (IOI) Initiative*, June 6, 2021, https://investinopen.org/blog/take-action-to-stop-the-lock-up-of-research-and-learning < https://investinopen.org/blog/take-action-to-stop-the-lock-up-of-research-and-learning> .

9. Jasbir Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017; Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

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Article details

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Toward an Alaskan Critical Regionalist Pedagogy: Mapping the Cruise Ship Industry through Visual Spatial Tactics

by Richard Simpson | Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT In an era when urban space is theorized as an educative science enhancing productivity, business, and management, we witness the emergence of teaching as a dominant productive force for the first time in the history of capital. Given the decisive role of knowledge production in the development of globalized urbanization it becomes vital to identify critical pedagogies that not only engage the production of space but grasp the production of space as pedagogical. To do so, I attend to interventions into regionalist studies and the global city to argue for visual spatial tactics as a tool for a critical regionalist pedagogy capable of linking material, affective, and discursive practices with a placed-based approach to globalized urbanization. Students design a collaborative website documenting the spatial history of cruise ship tourism in Alaska as an argument over the right to the city. Identifying this living process—framing the cruise industry as a constitutive system fusing discourse, space, and identity to restructure history, nature, and region—becomes a means of questioning and revising otherwise generalized theories often brought to bear on tourist landscapes, on Alaska, and on critical pedagogy itself. This case study shows the emergence of the cruise ship city as inseparable from the onset of globalized urbanization and how it, in turn, provides edifying material to mobilize a critical regionalist pedagogy within contemporary forms of educative landscapes.

KEYWORDS Alaska, countermap, cruise ship, globalization, higher education, pedagogy, regionalism, spatial relations, urban, visual spatial tactic

The Cruise Ship as Campus

In 2016, the *Crystal Serenity* became the largest luxury cruise liner to sail the northwest passage above North America.[1] This sea route linking the Atlantic and Pacific ocean has been unnavigable for centuries due to unpredictable variations in Arctic sea ice. But warming northern waters now welcome a new era in Arctic tourism that seeks to showcase remote indigenous communities and pristine glaciated landscapes even as they are threatened by climate change in the new century. In fact, threat is the appeal of the spectacle. Michael Byers refers to this new type of high-end travel as "extinction tourism" where travelers seek to experience species, cultures, and landscapes as they confront environmental crisis, a crisis born of high-fuel emission activities such as the cruise ship industry itself.[2] Contradictions such as these once served as a ready point of departure for critical pedagogy, but where does one begin once the critical ironies of capitalist processes are overshadowed by their sheer marketability?[3]

Meanwhile aboard the *Crystal Serenity*, pedagogy abounds. *Crystal Cruise Lines* offers passengers access to the Creative Learning Institute which partners with the Cleveland Clinic, Tai Chi Cultural Center, and the Society of Wine Educators to bring comprehensive instruction in languages, music, wellness, and art.[4] The Institute features programs with celebrity experts who offer *TEDx*-like lectures in a range of categories. Many luxury cruise lines now incorporate enrichment and educational programs as part of their sailing experience, and cruises can be found incorporating specific themes like cooking, computers, history, finance, astronomy, or art.[5] Colorado State University's Semester At Sea < https://www.semesteratsea.org> offers college credit to 1,500 undergraduates a year across seventy-five courses in humanities, business, and science. The floating campus of the *MV Explorer*, complete with classrooms, computer labs, and a nine thousand volume library, claims to make "the world your classroom" by circumnavigating the globe twice a year, making stops in different regions of the world in conjunction with course syllabi.[6]

The image of floating campuses networking learning environments around the world denotes how "knowledge economies" have made any dissociation between education and economics untenable.[7] With the transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation, as

universities shift from national to international protocols to redefine their operations, scholars have mapped the contours of an emergent hegemonic education paradigm that removes the logistic clash between democracy and market demand, links the interests of the state with global capital, and positions students as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life.[8] Although implemented as a measure of social control and a reaction to perceived political fears after World War II, the mid-century cultural institution of the American university initiated affordable and accessible mass education as a functional cornerstone of democracy and articulated a form of liberal arts motivated by preparing a diverse citizenship capable of engaging national and international problems as its prime objective.[9] Facing economic and cultural realities of neoliberal governmentality, the same institution now reframes knowledge, thought, and training toward developing human capital, and higher education now adopts corporate protocols to define its content and purpose, physical appearance, financial structure, evaluation metrics, management style, advertising, organization, and promotion.[10]

The impact of this evisceration of a mass liberal arts education over the past forty years demands ongoing rigorous attention. Equally important will be avoiding the paralysis of pedagogical imagination that follows from this expanded role of education as an instrument suturing globalized urbanization and the nation-state to neoliberal economic policy. I want to suggest that the conversion of students and state universities into subjects of the economic imagination works both ways, and knowledge production today —in the form of Crystal's Creative Learning Institute, as much as biometric turns in organizational studies, quantifications of selfhood, smart cities, and parametric urbanism, to name a few—arises as a staple of economic value and a driving force of global production and consumption processes, while the university itself, far from crumbling in ruins, ascends as a key protagonist in the development of multinational economies, globalized urban space, and prestige networks for individual success.[11] In an era when urban space is theorized as an educative science to enhance productivity, business, and management, we witness the act of educating, perhaps for the first time in the history of capitalism, as a dominant productive force of economic expansion.[12] Indeed the advent of knowledge economies references the scale to which education mediates the spatial restructuring of nation-states into new global economic regimes harnessing flexible systems of accumulation and broad interdependent networks, transnational migration, and regional urban development premised upon deterritorialized flows of capital, often anchored precisely by university and corporate campuses that distinguish regional cultures.[13] In this historical context, a critical pedagogy must emerge from how the material and discursive production of education practices, whether on cruise ships, college campuses, or "cities of knowledge," instantiate social relationships that have implications for the state's formation, or disintegration, in regard to processes of globalization and neoliberalism.[14] If the cruise ship today is a metonym of the corporatized campus, we may do well to search for such a critical pedagogy within its unique spatial formations in which multinational capital functions omnipresently over local decisions, governments, and urbanization.[15]

At the University of Alaska Southeast, my students and I approach the transformation of downtown Juneau as an argument and contestation over the right to the city, as well as an active public discourse producing and circulating polemical images and popular practices of a region currently in the throes of cruise ship "touristification." Identifying the specific contours of this living process—framing the cruise ship industry as a constitutive system fusing discourse, urban space, and social identity to restructure local history, nature, and region—became a means of questioning and revising the otherwise generalized theories often brought to bear on tourist landscapes, on Alaska, and on critical pedagogy itself. Over the course of a fifteen-week semester, our digital cartographic website, entitled Globalizing Southeast Alaska < https://www.historypin.org/en/cultural-geography-of-southeast-alaska/globalizing-southeast-alaska/geo/58.301944,-134.419722,4/bounds/38.088681,-154.611129,71.197292,-114.228315/paging/1> , became an active space for political formation and the collective production of knowledge as students engaged the impact of cruise ship tourism—that is to say the cultural, rhetorical, and material resonance between their everyday lives, abstract flows of the global economy, labor, and state, federal, and international policy in southeast Alaska—as constitutive of spatial inequalities, uneven social relations, and systemic racism and classism. My purpose in analyzing this project in this article is to extend its productivity, to learn something from it, which is the goal of pedagogical practice, by applying its lessons not so much as a model of critical pedagogy, but as a cultural practice for a particular place and time. The cartographic itineraries of the *Crystal Serenity* seizes opportunities for remapping the northwest passage and establishing a future that

monetizes the newly accessible landscapes incurred by climate change while at the same time doubling down on the logic and impact of carbon capitalism (see Figure 1).



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Figure-1_-Rich-Simpson.jpg>

Figure 1. The Crystal Serenity at a stop in Ulukhaktok in the Inuvik region of Canada. Ulukhaktok had a population of 419 in 2016. The Crystal Serenity brings 1,000 passengers on its luxury liner. Photograph by Katie Orlinksy, used with permission.

The following counter-mapping project confronts this form of globalized urbanization by forging a progressive classroom practice that merges the digital with the residual materials of tradition and nostalgia animating the regional rhetorics of Alaska.

In the following case study, I use critical regionalism to frame a digital pedagogy capable of establishing three discursive connections or "joints": first, students' own spatial knowledge about their home and everyday life situated within their own struggles over space as it pertains to class, race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity; second, the non-representable, abstract processes of late capitalist globalization; and third, the situated discursive and material rhetorics of space in southeast Alaska. In the act of mapping these connections, my students identify the ways their own lives are interpellated into a place-making process in Juneau, both as local subjects and objects of global determinations, and they develop a sense that they are a part of social and political change. I pay particular attention to the process of student collaboration to examine visual spatial tactics as instruments that facilitate shared knowledge, collective interpretive framing, and political formation. I conclude by addressing the educative potential of a critical regionalist pedagogy as an interdisciplinary and transnational educational theory for analyzing the interurban rise of the cruise ship city and neoliberal global formations.

The task of a transformative pedagogy involves the reconfiguration of the relations of dominant spatial processes, the necessity to reinvent urbanization in ways designed to maximize human freedom. This involves much more than democratic access to public resources such as education. In *The Right to the City*, Henri Lefebvre insists that access and equal distribution are not enough—the ultimate political stake involves the collective right to engage landscape as an artistic human practice, that is to say as a pedagogical project, which includes the potential to make and remake identity and collectivity itself.[16] In this work, I identify the way in which the right to the city includes the act of writing the city. As such, I show how a critical regionalist pedagogy contributes to an understanding of urbanization as a social right by creating a learning process whereby students write the city as a social production, and in doing so, grasp urbanization as indispensable to social change through its capacity to link global relations, practices, and structures to the struggles of everyday life.

Toward a Critical Regionalist Pedagogy

In his analysis of the cultural logic of global market capital, Fredric Jameson asserts that one of the integral features of postmodernism is its open tolerance for an aesthetics of didacticism, and as such, the work of identifying creative and critical possibilities within this expanded realm of art and culture becomes urgent.[17] Given the pervasive educative motive embraced by the cruise ship industry, and multinational capital in general, it becomes necessary to distinguish sites of teaching not solely in terms of their ideological position, but also in terms of their relational position, that is, the way historical, social, and lived dimensions function within a setting as a productive and constitute practice. As such, in the era of globalization, new organs of analysis capable of relationality and association become vital, and regionalism has emerged as a valuable spatial category precisely due to its mediating role between urban, national, and international signification. Through a rhetorical lens, region does not mark a bounded space or territory, but rather emphasizes what Doreen Massey calls "relational space," or heterotopias characterized by relationships between and among places.[18] Massey argues against neatly defined distinctions between the local and global that are implied when scholars theorize global cities as having a particular set of distinct properties. Instead emergent spatial forms of globalized urbanization demarcate dialectical relationships between collective actors through a variety of global, regional, and local flows that actively negotiate these scaled topographies.[19]

Building on this relational approach, critical regionalism has emerged as an aesthetic paradigm across a range of disciplines, a development that may signal its value as much as its failure, given that this polemic was precisely called upon to challenge disciplinary boundaries.[20] Yet theoretical emphases on relational flows and practices over and against static conceptions of place and identity have proven to have limitations. Barbara L. Allen calls for a rethinking of theoretical approaches to critical regionalism by implementing performative modes of action in which place is given meaning based upon the unique forms of relationships that geographically locate identity.[21] Allen takes up Judith Butler's performative theory to push beyond simply identifying scaled flows, activities, and practices as a basis for conceptualizing place-based identities, and toward directly addressing the "glaring omission" that socially-constructed "practices" and "interactions" remain under-theorized and under-represented in the body of regionalist and critical regionalist literature. "What is needed," writes Allen, "are more robust tools for understanding the intersection of cultural practices and regional places."[22]

The concept of "region" has additionally received attention from urban studies where scholars have sought place-based approaches to the global city. Ananya Roy argues that area-based knowledge deepens theoretical attempts to articulate a relational study of space and place and that theories of the global city must be developed in specific places and require a "rather paradoxical combination of specificity and generalizability: that theories have to be produced in space (and it matters where they are produced), but that they can then be appropriated, borrowed, and remapped. In this sense, the sort of theory being urged is simultaneously located and dislocated."[23] This dilemma of representing that which is located and dislocated, I argue, involves the sort of theory that may also be called an allegory. That is, a way of producing the placed-based specificity of contemporary global interurban networks as well as the material transformations, consequences, and implications of their dislocated practices. These interventions demand pedagogical tools that conjoin seemingly oppositional forces of material forms and discursive practices within a specified placed-based approach to dislocated processes of globalized interurbanization.

To advance these lines of research seeking to strengthen regionalist approaches to global urbanization and to develop critical regionalism as an interdisciplinary pedagogy, I want to briefly examine Fredric Jameson's discussion of this "architecture of resistance" to address how its intersectional dynamic may differentiate an aesthetic practice outside the ideological constraints of postmodernism.[24] In *The Seeds of Time* Jameson identifies critical regionalism's repudiation of corporate hegemony, yet notes that this aesthetic does not seek recourse within the provincial as in the sentimentalization of the local one finds, for example, in the practice of neoregionalism.[25] Instead, the residual practices and traditions of a region, or culturally coherent zone, that stand opposed to the homogenizing processes of globalization are taken up as the very means to establish an environment where "the body as a whole is seen as being essential to the manner in which it is experienced."[26] The link here between the representational space of the body and the experience of the body, or between the visual and experiential, becomes a productive or

constitutive practice. Indeed this relationship between the visual/representational and the tactile/experiential becomes Jameson's primary interest in critical regionalism, as it does not aim to pin these variables against each other, but rather offers a language that permits us to reconfigure their synesthetic relationality in a number of unexpected ways. Critical regionalism challenges the primacy of the visual by shifting attention to the non-representational category of the pressurized joint as the primordial element of architecture and indeed of space itself. Any building, structure, or space comes into being precisely through the configuration of a set of fundamental tensions locked into a play of union and disunion in which one material or system exists and gives way to another. In drawing attention to the relation of oppositional forces that brings a site into being, critical regionalism opens an interpretive practice of architecture and landscape that avoids isolating any one category, or system of knowing, and prioritizes the diverse range of oppositional, yet telluric conditions of the site itself as fundamental to its composition. The goal is not to establish realism or authenticity of the local, but rather to site locations in such a way that constitutes the act of acknowledging spatially and temporally limited compositional factors at work in the production of space and its modification.[27]

Jameson's formal assessment of critical regionalism's differentiation from postmodernism provides a pedagogic method that integrates a place-based conjuncture of diverse registers—scientific principles, metaphor, materiality, and affect—conventionally held in opposition to one another or rejected outright as inauthentic. This practice identifies forces in opposition as its constitutive structural framework, marking a conceptual shift toward identifying moments of both collaboration and disjunction, as a means to identify an interdisciplinary pedagogy capable of relating systems of knowledge otherwise perceived as incompatible. Diverse knowledge systems and scaled relations are inescapable site-specific determinants of any critical regionalist practice, and therefore before addressing my case study, it is necessary to articulate the regional rhetorics that site this neogeographic project within the constraining forces of a particular time and space.

Late Capital Juneau

One of the premises of this essay is that educative spaces or pedagogical landscapes, such as what I am calling the cruise ship city, have emerged as imaginary geographies necessitated by current forces of production and the structural practices of contemporary urbanized globalization.[28] Representations of space as 'frontiers' or 'hinterlands' outside the reach of capital are inaccurate and deceptive.[29] Narratives about the periphery, however intensely authored by the cruise ship industry, must in fact be grasped as dominant mechanisms subordinating space to capital, and analyzing this located and dislocated process strengthens our theorization of globalized urbanization among, within, and beyond studies of New York, Mumbai, and London.[30]

In 2019, cruise ship tourism marked the fastest growing segment in global travel with an increase of 8.4% per year in the number of passengers worldwide.[31] In the past decade, tourism has been southeast Alaska's largest private industry both in terms of jobs and workforce earnings.[32] Since 2016, 90 percent of all tourists arrive in Southeast by cruise ship. Over the past five years, downtown Juneau, the state capital, overhauled its entire commercial district to prioritize tourism and cruise ship travel as a source of economic prosperity premised upon the income of visitor shopping, commercial passenger vessel revenues, employment opportunities, and lodging and sales tax ushered in by expanding the capacity and frequency of cruise ship tourism.[33] With this goal in mind, city officials financed a complete reconstruction of the downtown marina to vastly increase ports of call and to accommodate larger cruise ships by installing floating Panamax docks capable of supporting two thousand-foot ships at a time, repaving streets and rerouting traffic to produce commercial corridors for tourists, and commissioning a series of artworks, sculptures, museums, tours, way-finding systems, and a mile-long Seawalk leading to a forty-five-foot bronze statue of a humpback whale breaching an infinity pool overlooking the channel (see Figure 2).[34]



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Figure-2_-Rich-Simpson.jpg>

Figure 2. A bronze humpback whale statue breaching an infinity pool overlooking Gastineau Channel in downtown Juneau, Alaska. Photograph by Risha Isom < https://www.rishaisomphotography.com> , used with permission

Juneau maintains a population of 32,000 people, and between the six months of May and October, the city receives one and a half million tourists from approximately 600 international cruise ships.[35] In a historical moment marked by depreciating oil prices, this restructuring toward the spatial vernacular of cruise ships has been given a legitimized sheen, even as money generated by tourism remains a marginal percentage of the state's income.[36]

Yet this spectacular urban investment designed to attract larger and more frequent cruise ships occurs at the same historical moment as the full-blown dismantling of state services, including Head Start, Medicaid, public transportation, cruise-ship pollution oversight, mental-health services, and higher education. Governor Mike Dunleavy introduced these cuts in an effort to increase the annual oil revenue dividend that the state pays to every resident, thereby shifting state support for public resources into the decisions of private individuals resulting in a complete transformation of the production of space in Alaska.[37] For example, the state's drastic reduction of the ferry system will be fatal for many rural communities in the state who rely on marine transportation forcing these populations, many composed of Alaskan Natives, into the three major cities of the state.[38] While national media coverage readily documents the relocation of Alaskan villages as a result of geographic effects of climate change, often incorrectly constructing narratives of disempowered Alaskan Natives, many more will be forced into displacement due the reduction of funding to the state ferry system.[39] Thus with a struggling state economy, government officials utilize the urban core of Juneau to secure Alaska's hand as a top destination for Carnival, Norwegian, and Royal Caribbean, while simultaneously eliminating state services and public resources, systematically undermining the needs, access, and survival of Native populations throughout the state. The increasing mobility of tourists in and out of the state weakens the already precarious position of rural communities in Alaska, and one wonders what options the state will provide displaced residents facing higher costs of living in the urban centers with reduced state services. Additionally the primary means of socio-economic mobility, higher education, will be less accessible and available. The University of Alaska, the education system in which I currently teach, has been issued a $70 million budget cut, forcing the university to declare financial exigency and the board of regents to initiate a task force to consolidate three regional institutions—located at Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau—into one accredited university. In the summer of 2019, John Davies, the UA board of regents chairman, described the state university system as "grappling with survival."[40]

"Survival" is not simply an economic issue in Alaska as the term carries environmental, cultural, and colonial dimensions as well, and given our focus on points of oppositional

forces, the rhetorical figures at work defining this region at a particular historical moment substantiate the raw material from which a critical regionalist pedagogy must emerge. As we have already seen with "extinction" tourism, "near-death" and "survival" are given increased cultural purchase in an era defined by environmental crises. Susan Kollin identifies this trope of survival as central to the literary and cultural history of Alaska, whose regional identity, often premised upon the depiction of a place removed from the rest of the world, now deploys a setting of extremity that provides cultural value to adventures in remote regions. Film and television shows such as *Grizzly Man*, *Into the Wild*, and *Survivor*, and the recent surge of extreme sports such as climbing Denali, heleskiing, and Arctic surfing, have become wildly popular cultural phenomenon premised upon human encounter with extraordinary places, animals, and landscapes. Access to treks into the wild characterize a popular outdoor lifestyle, once the basis of a counterculture resistance, that grant consumers—typically white, affluent men who need not worry about any other form of physical survival—a high degree of cultural capital. Kollin situates these narratives and representations by reminding us that, just as Western imperialism was originally shaped by economic expansion into the interior of the Arctic, today the popularity of extreme adventures further expands capital's domain into the last remote enclaves of untouched nature, now prized for their ideological position as seemingly closed off from the rest of the world, thereby charging voyages of survival as powerful rhetorical devices capable of concealing the material, economic, racialized, and gendered bias of such "natural" encounters.[41]

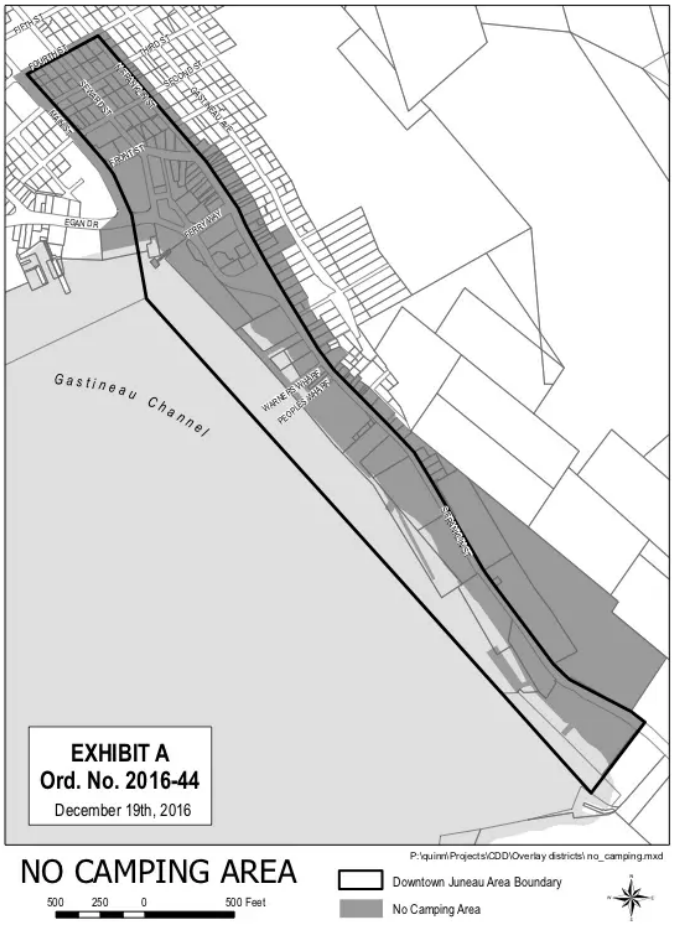
While these experiences on modernism's imagined periphery reveal social privilege, they also register larger geo-economic practices which no longer situate Alaska as a remote enclave of Western imagination, but rather as a central battleground of oppositional forces that permit a clearer understanding of the circuits of production and consumption of global capital. As fleets of cruise ships look to subsume new territories in the subarctic to stage encounters with the extreme species and spaces, we find new narratives of "interiority" in which human development and socialization are possible only through encounters at the boundaries of the human and non-human. We may consider *Into the Wild* and *Grizzly Man* as representations of cultural expansion in which humans attempt to push further and further into an interior space. While Chris McCandless' and Timothy Treadwell's experiences fit the genre of the "Alaska death tale," they are more precisely stories about the desire to connect with nature, and in the process, die by or as food sources in the Alaskan wilderness. McCandles unknowingly foraged *Hedysarum alpinum* seeds which contain deadly neurotoxins and Treadwell mistakenly imagined a kinship with grizzly bears which led to his mauling and consumption.[42]

In each instance, surviving involves reaching toward a new reality, one that extends inward as an attempt to "find oneself by losing oneself," or outward, to forge a domestic relationship with wild species. In such acts of survival premised on an imaginary, remote, and interiorized space located deep in the Alaskan backcountry, we glimpse a desire for forms of knowledge that have been scrubbed of cultural influence as ideas of unspoiled nature come to define the character of this extra-aesthetic, nonmeaningful locale. This imaginary extra-urban interior zone premised upon scenes of survival open the hope for a kind of anti- or pre-modernist space.[43] Yet this desire to commune with an imagined interiority is of course no less stylistically produced than the urban metropolis it seeks to condemn.[44] In representing Alaska as a wild and timeless region, this last 'frontier' now conjures a secular sacredness that isolates this place from human history and in doing so inscribes familiar narratives of 'discovery' that historically legitimized Western capital development and the dispossession of land from Native populations through scientific discourse.[45] Thus we find the trope of survival now pedagogically motivating a range of political ambitions from the desire to locate a last vestige of interiority removed from urban decay and cultural influences, to the narratives of extinction that justify settler colonial practices, to doom tourism providing education and entertainment value for a multinational cruise ship industry.

Without a space for the social production of nature—that is, a concept of human freedom and social development through production and reproduction of the earth—the desire to imbue a deep and vast interiority with stories of survival, in the name of antidote or industry, brutally subordinates these spaces to capital where one is then forced, by capital, to have no choice but to neurotically eat away at the borders of the human and non-human. These two documentaries, perhaps the most viral representations of Alaska in late capitalism and undoubtedly responsible for increased tourism, anticipate the kinds of cross-species exchanges that now occur on a much larger global scale through intensified agribusiness expansion in the global south which induce the development of exotic

species on wet markets, seemingly causing zoonotic transfers of the kind originating COVID-19.[46] Indeed this urgent desire for survival in the interior hinterlands arises precisely as both a counter-therapy to intensified urbanization as well as a commercial and industrial operation that exposes the overlapping interface between socio-economic production and the biological substrate of the natural world. We cannot understand or experience nature today apart from global production and consumption demanded by capital. Alaska's current dominant thematic of hinterland survival becomes a powerful discourse contributing to its urbanization as a theater of human engagement with macro- and microbiological organisms that erode the boundaries between the human and non-human world as if both were not already immanent to the global market.[47]

Narratives of survival in Alaska may thus be understood as formative of what Jessica Enoch calls the rhetorics of space or "those material and discursive practices that work to compose and enhance a space."[48] In the pedagogical section to follow, I show how my students began the semester by collecting patterns of the regional rhetorics of Juneau and how they forge relationships between cultural activities, urban planning, city, state, and federal policy. These material and discursive practices compose a rhetorics of space that create the urban core of the city, and students engaged this composition to map the way identity in Alaska, including their own, is edified and produced in the current historical moment.[49] While Alaska's representation of an imaginary biosphere outside urbanization inculcates survival-within-a-vast-interiority as a form of cultural capital, it also has consequences beyond the privileged practices of recreation, education, and self-discovery. On a local scale in Juneau, this discourse bears upon even those who do not seek the outdoors but are forced to survive outdoors, as they too are reframed through this popular language of recreation. The massive urban redevelopment of the Juneau marina required the removal of the city's homeless population away from the major commercial thoroughfare of downtown to erase the unpleasant sight of the destitute and eliminate the harassment of tourists within the shopping district. To do so, city officials enforced what they called a "no camping" ordinance allowing the police to evict people sleeping on private property in specific districts downtown (see Figure 3).[50]



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Figure-3_-Rich-Simpson.jpg>

Figure 3. Map showing the area of enforcement of a "no camping" ordinance along the marina shopping district of downtown. The ordinance prohibits camping on the street between midnight and 7 a.m. in the downtown marina between Fourth Street and the cruise ship terminal. The marina has recently been reconstructed to provide docking for six cruise ships at one time. Image courtesy of City and Bureau of Juneau Assembly Agenda Proposal for Ordinance 2016–44 < https://packet.cbjak.org/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=3580&MeetingID=552> .

In addition to proximity to free meals provided by the Glory Hole kitchen, the homeless have historically congregated downtown once the tourist shops close in order to turn the entryways of diamond, souvenir, and T-shirt stores into temporary sleeping quarters due to the stream of heat that leaks through the cracks of their entryway doors. The forced removal of the homeless from resources downtown is then neutralized by determining homelessness as a personal choice, as simply choosing a recreational lifestyle.

Given that the majority of Juneau's homeless are Alaskan Native, the no-camping ordinance may be understood as a regional spatial practice, or "specific social formation" of the settler colonial structure in which an indigenous population is effectively dominated and displaced on Native land.[51] The particular insidiousness of the no-camping ordinance is the way the language of leisure is deployed to validate the colonial structure and entrench this urban landscape with a policing apparatus that serves the interests of the cruise industry to an unprecedented degree. By extending the idea of camping to include the activities of the most precarious segment of the city's population, homelessness is identified by the state as a lifestyle practice on par with any other extreme outdoor activity. Hand-to-mouth survival in the alcove of diamond stores becomes relative to the risk of skiing black diamond slopes. By reframing a multi-million dollar urban infrastructure as a wilderness campsite, homelessness in Juneau can be associated with Alaska's recreational

lifestyle, not a failure of the state to provide resources, employment, mental health service, and affordable housing to its citizens.

Identifying the homeless as campers enacts a rhetorics of space through framing modes of belonging and thus may more accurately be understood as a regional rhetoric of space.[52] This discourse of outdoor recreation is not simply the imbrication of the ideological aesthetics of REI and Patagonia onto Alaska, but a discursive practice that effectively shapes the material landscape and thereby determines who can and cannot survive within this urban setting. In addition to the no-camping ordinance, we witness the full force of outdoor lifestyle narratives on the lives of Alaskans when we ask how the state ranking second in the nation for methamphetamine deaths, holding the highest suicide rate, and having double the national average of rape and sexual assault today emerges as a premier destination for self-discovery and an escape from the ills of urbanization and all of the alienating effects of modern society.[53] In the face of these sobering statistics, the portrayal of Alaska as a pristine wilderness and natural environment indeed requires a profound act of imagination. Any regional studies today thus requires a means to integrate such local contradictions within the framework of larger historical and social processes and their implications.

Having provided an overview of how regional rhetorics of southeast Alaska function as educative spatial strategies contextualizing the project, I turn now to my implementation of a place-based interdisciplinary pedagogic approach to digital counter-mapping that seeks to address how a multinational cruise industry actively produces material, social, and political effects on the way both tourists and Alaskans think and act in this landscape. My students and I wanted to map the rhetorical process by which multinational cruise ship corporations actively create textual representations about Alaska today, and in doing so, shape and construct the landscape, identities, and practices of the state in a moment of environmental crisis. The object of study became defining the specific forces of opposition within circulating discourses, individual needs, and spatial power-geometries that are articulated in the social relationships that define southeast Alaskan tourism. By actively siting the cruise ship industry as a constitutive system producing discourse, materiality, and social acts that restructure history, landscape, and tradition, students enacted visual spatial tactics to develop collaborative formations of shared knowledge, interpretive regionalist framing, and ultimately their own political formation.

Juneau Visual Spatial Tactics

The distinction between strategy and tactic outlined in Michel de Certeau's *Pratiques Quotidiennes* (1980) remains a powerful means of analyzing the intersection of practices and places.[54] Strategy describes the calculation of relationships that physically "take place" and, as such, advantageously positions itself to manage and influence future relations. Strategy presupposes the formation of a sustained power through a "congealed historical configuration" and, once given a proper place, establishes a readable environment that legitimates educational or ideological practices and ultimately determines the social characteristics of knowledge itself.[55] The culmination of Juneau's urban revitalization described above in which a transnational cruise industry, city developers, and state policy restructure land use and urban space to accelerate and intensify global capital pathways into the city are projections of de Certeau's concept of strategy. Maps also derive power precisely from the rhetorical weight of abstracting socially contingent relationships and making them strategically appear as stable hegemonic representations of territory and property. Scholars and activists have responded by developing a practice of counter-mapping, allowing those that live in a mapped area to create representations of themselves by developing place-making practices that often challenge and subvert the categories of intelligibility of traditional cartography.[56]

As strategies imply hierarchies of power, they generate corresponding tactical practices. Tactics have no proper place and no autonomy as they are predicated on the absence of power and therefore mark momentary misuse of an existing imposed upon terrain. As kairotic gestures, tactics advance opportunistically in relation to the present set of power relations, much like the way the Juneau homeless use the alcove of a jewelry store as a temporary place to sleep. De Certeau regards tactics as acts of evasion or resistance by marginalized individuals toward their surroundings. The value of this term for me is not to romanticize transiency or mobility, or even the appropriation of space, but rather the way tactics reveal specific needs, desires, and activities that are otherwise unavailable within

communities. When contextualized by the historical and spatial specificity of regional rhetorics, tactics allow us to become sensitive to area-based practices and critiques that may form the basis of emergent social and political relationships. Indeed mapping the scaled intersectional joints of places and practices composing the regional rhetorics of Juneau ultimately demonstrated a performative mode of political subject formation precisely by understanding this process as one that involves its own strategies and tactics.

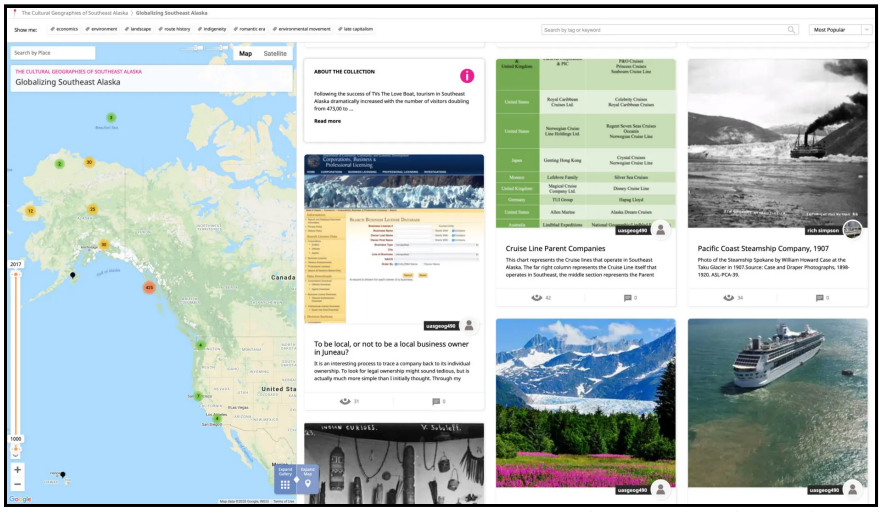
Sarah Elwood and Katharyne Mitchell have retooled tactics for educational purposes within the context of popular forms of volunteered geographic information, or VGI. By democratizing access to mapping practices, VGI dramatically differs from traditional cartography in that it emphasizes augmenting conventional forms of geographic information with the knowledge of citizen-driven data collection.[57] The growing availability of cheap and free positioning devices, fine resolution imagery, and mapping software enable the ability to create maps that reflect personal and temporary needs, in contrast to the strategic purposes of traditional cartography. Elwood and Mitchell identify "visual spatial tactics" as digital practices that rework the spatial norms of a cartographic interface and the restrictions of strategic place-making.[58] Given the development of neogeography as an arena of emergent place-based digital practice, I want to contribute to the critical potential of visual spatial tactics by discussing how my students situate knowledge production arising from the circulating discourses that define the production and reproduction of cruise ship tourism in southeast Alaska.[59] In turn, these visual spatial tactics enable us to identify how critical engagements with hegemonic spatial strategies within a region elicits political and educational formation.

Many of my students grew up in Juneau or Alaska and are familiar with the cruise industry because of summer jobs trail guiding on glaciers or leading animal-based excursions such as whale-watching or fly fishing.[60] They are primarily working and middle-class young adults who enroll with the intention of obtaining a BA or BS degree, thereby gaining an employment advantage in a tourism, park service, or government position throughout the state. Their initial perception of the cruise industry, like many, was positive in that cruises offer much-needed employment opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable. One student's recollection of the collapsed timber industry in the 1990s informs the way in which tourism is understood as a means of survival for many in the state:

> I can vividly remember the timber industry vanishing, almost overnight in some places. Many people lost their jobs, homes were repossessed, people moved out of the region by the thousands, and there was this angry fog that settled in most of the communities. The dark presence is still felt in some places. This was the transition time between timber and tourism, marking the end of one era and the beginning of another. I am relieved that tourism has created a way for the region's people to make a living and provide for their families. People have to eat and bills need to be paid. Tourism has filled this need in many places.[61]

Given the recent intensity with which the Alaskan state has committed itself to increase the size and number of ships, as well as my students' own obligatory position vis-à-vis the industry, our initial goal was simply to conduct research that would identify how these ships produce space in southeast Alaska. In the first five weeks of the semester, we read cultural and historical analyses of representations of Alaska and then students turned to research cruise ships in the library and in the city. We visited state archives and city museums, collected newspaper reports and policy regulations, conducted personal interviews with local tour guide companies, shop owners, and government officials, and researched scholarship on the cruise ship industry. This work was not meant to be exhaustive, but to initiate a collection of materials relevant to the industry in hopes of engaging the public in dialogue on the state's recent total commitment to cruise ship tourism. In addition, students focused only on subjects that were of personal interest and, after our initial readings, we identified five categories of analysis: economics, environment, landscape, history, and indigeneity.

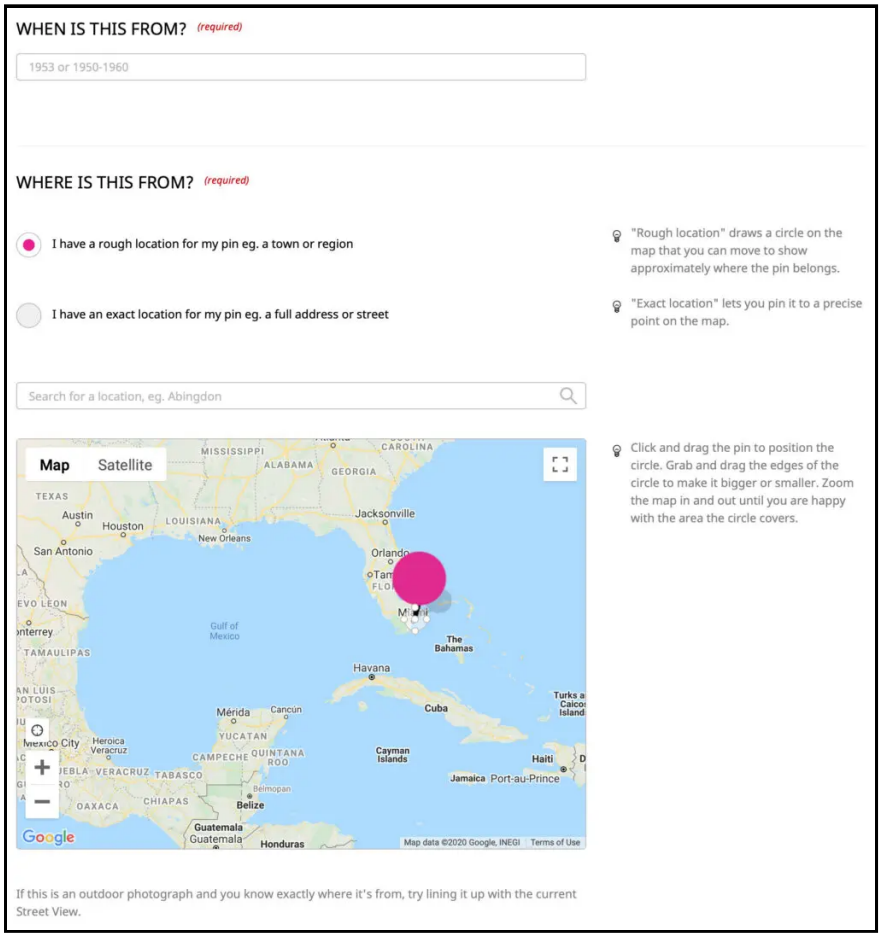
To map how the cruise ship industry impacts southeast Alaska in terms of these categories, we used the online geomedia platform Historypin. This website allows users to "pin" images, texts, and video onto latitudinal and longitudinal sites of a shared interactive map. Each pin can also be placed within a particular year as the map contains a toggle that allows users to view locations within particular time periods. Setting the timeline from 1990–1995, for example, will display pins of events occurring within that temporal window. The map also zooms from a street view out to a continental view of the world, again altering the pins on display according to movements of the map scale (see Figure 4).



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Figure-4-Rich-Simpson.jpg>

Figure 4. Screenshot of Globalizing Southeast Alaska < https://www.historypin.org/en/cultural-geography-of-southeast-alaska/globalizing-southeast-alaska/geo/58.301944,-134.419722,4/bounds/34.910196,-157.466292,72.4312,-111.373152/paging/1> website showing pins corresponding to the temporal and spatial scale of the map.

The act of pinning thus involves acknowledgment of the spatial and temporal context in which each pin's content, events, and practices are modified or come into being (see Figure 5).



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Figure-5.pdf-Rich-Simpson.jpg>

Figure 5. Each pin requires the user to complete an online form specifying the spatial and temporal context of the material, events, and practices pertaining to the content of the created pin. The user may also move the range of the area that the pin covers.

In this project, pinning constitutes a visual spatial tactic in that students articulate the processes and experiences that are often invisible, unknown, or disregarded in dominant representations and narratives about Alaska. We emphasized collaborative authorship by having students utilize one sign-in name, which gave an aesthetic uniformity to the pins and provided a way to signal the baseline research of this student collective to future authors who may add to the project over time. I understand this project's use of Historypin as a form of neogeographic praxis in that it constitutes a social form of mapmaking as well as in the way students interacted with one another's mapping process. By collaborating to write the regional rhetorics of southeast Alaska, they became aware of how the everydayness of the cruise ship industry shapes their own perceptions and beliefs as well as how social, economic, and cultural inequalities are embedded in the landscape. These insights are fundamental to the formation of political subjects, as students came to perceive their lives as part of a larger collective process of global capital, recognized how social and spatial inequalities produced aspects of their own identities and how these identities, in turn, reproduced themselves through their own everyday practices within the landscape.

In effect, this collaborative approach to map-making allowed students to assemble and create an understanding of the region and themselves within it. Students began to discern patterns based on their shared findings and this provoked new conceptions of the city precisely by understanding the multiple ways the cruise ship industry plays a determining role in the regionalization of their community.[62] For example, in the process of mapping stores that are owned by cruise lines, one student noted the way in which the ships literally compose the form and logistics of urban space. Students learned that the cruise-owned

souvenir stores are strategically located in the immediate shopping district that tourists encounter after deboarding:

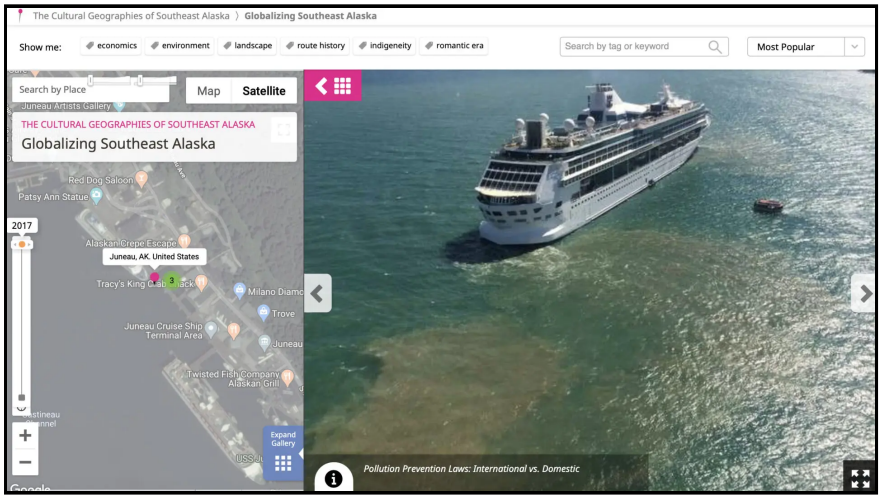
> Because these businesses are on the front lines of South Franklin street, they spark the initial interest of buyers and receive the majority of the profits the tourist is willing to spend. The cruise lines themselves tailor maps to exclude many local, year round businesses and promote those businesses that they own.[63]

This detection of the spatial advantage of corporate ownership along South Franklin street then resonated in stark opposition to the concurrent "no camping" ordinance instituted over the same area by the city government. The new downtown marina now emerges as a literal extension of the space of the cruise ships as this ordinance effectively insulates the street from the local poor who are criminalized for attempting to use public space for survival tactics. Students identified this urban strategy again in a lawsuit over head tax revenues that Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) filed against the city of Juneau in 2016. CLIA claims that the construction of the new coastal Seawalk bears little or no relation to serving passengers or crew and therefore violates an eighteenth-century tonnage and commerce clause prohibiting states from taxing vessels in port.[64] Here, a multinational corporation seeks to challenge the constitutionality of the tax in hopes of setting a precedent for eliminating those levied in other municipalities. The lawsuit reiterates the battle over urban space usage, and students identify the spatial and historical patterns of political opposition at work through the landscape. Another student writes,

> For decades, large multinational corporations have been fighting the state of Alaska to get more freedom without having to pay. Oil companies, mining companies, logging companies, and now cruise lines are fighting to pay less for their presence in the state.[65]

Through the scenographic practice of researching, composing, and geolocating discursive and material events layered within the composition of pins in and around South Franklin street, students conjoin ways in which multinational capital not only occupies prime territory downtown, but also leverages laws and policies to avoid paying for urban development it deems unsuitable to its own benefit. A historical and spatial pattern recognition emerges embedded in the landscape through the process of collaboratively pinning onto the map, demonstrating how visual spatial tactics teach students to recognize this landscape as a political site of struggle. In this example, the visual accumulation of pins juxtaposing the designated cruise-owned stores, the no-camping ordinance, and the CLIA lawsuit illustrates how regional identity is contingent upon tensions that reproduce advantages for multinationals. Student recognition of the embedded historical recurrence of companies "fighting . . . to get more freedom without having to pay" exemplifies the form of politics that emerge through visual spatial tactics.

Recognizing these oppositional tensions at work across this region involves a second visual spatial tactic, one that challenges modes of inquiry that separate urban space from global processes. A *New York Times* article reported that Princess Cruises pleaded guilty to illegally dumping oil waste, bilge, and grey water into the ocean from 2005 to 2013.[66] One student wanted to incorporate this article onto our map; however such pollution practices do not lend themselves to isolating one location. The site is impossible to ascertain as the impact of the practice transcends spatial-temporal specificity and thus immediately engages the question of scale discussed above. This pin functioned therefore to mark another constructive joint of oppositional forces within the project and within southeast Alaska, in that, being neither inherently local or global, the student's dilemma about where exactly to locate the pin registers the way in which it forces a break from choosing one of those two isolated modes of inquiry. Cruise ship activity at once pollutes across multiple oceans, including the ecosystem of Alaskan waters, and pumps damaging quantities of noxious nitrous dioxide into the atmosphere over extended durations of time.[67] The student decided to pin the analysis of the report into the Juneau harbor (see Figure 6).



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Figure-6.pdf-Rich-Simpson.jpg>

Figure 6. Screenshot of counter-cartographic subsumption < https://www.historypin.org/en/cultural-geography-of-southeast-alaska/globalizing-southeast-alaska/geo/58.297402,-134.403034,17/bounds/58.295699,-134.405264,58.299105,-134.400805/paging/1/pin/1068048> of multinational cruise ship pollution within the harbor of Juneau, Alaska. In juxtaposing information on the global violations of the cruise ship industry with a map of Juneau harbor, the student associates spaces and practices that are connected through non-representable temporal and environmental impacts of cruise ship pollution.

Here the student circumvents the geographic constraints of the map and brings within the space of the local these otherwise non-representational temporally-distributed practices. This polemical expansion of the harbor to include global violations extends the cartographic boundary of the local grid to incorporate the pollution of Princess Cruises and thereby absorbs this industry into the very composition of the natural environment of the Gastineau channel. In doing so, the student uses the pin as a visual spatial tactic to articulate the resistant act of extending the local to subsume the global environmental impact of multinational capital.

Perceiving such non-representational spatial impacts on the city also involved extending the temporality of pollution upon the region. Regarding this pin, the student explains the excessive and unseen duration of the presence of the ships by synthesizing several issues that arose in their research on cruise ship pollution:

> The pollution will come full circle, it won't just be some far off polar bear starving to death on a melting iceberg, it will be our coastline real estate washing away in the ocean or our Alaskan salmon populations poisoning our communities. Other industries such as commercial fishing operations and glacier tourism will cease to exist if cruise ship tourism continues at the rate it is going. Pollution creates human health issues like hormonal and reproductive problems, nervous system damage, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's and heart disease. . . . All of this in the name of what? It is clearly not a sustainable endeavor. There will be no pristine oceans or mountains for cruise ship tourists to gaze upon. Cruise ship tourism will implode from the inevitable degradation of the driving force of its income, the environment.[68]

In exhibiting this contradiction of capital through its environmental impact on southeast Alaska, this mapping is no longer one of an enclosed, static, interiorized, and isolated wilderness that we find in the survival tropes about Alaska. Instead regional rhetorics are deployed to define a practiced place composed of intersecting systems of knowledge, conjoining the material landscape to non-representational, and often effaced, spatial and temporal forces of the multinational cruise ship industry. Traditional cartographic practices and colonial relations between nature and culture, environment and economy, time and space are disrupted by mapping the city as a place undergirded by multinational industrial processes.

Placing pins as discursive joints of opposing forces throughout the map leads to my third example of visual spatial tactics as students posed critical questions about these current

socio-spatial strategies with the intent of imagining an entirely different social arrangement. Students' frustration at identifying the way these industries are detrimental to the future of their region and its people became a foundation for critique, and they began articulating questions regarding what can be done and how:

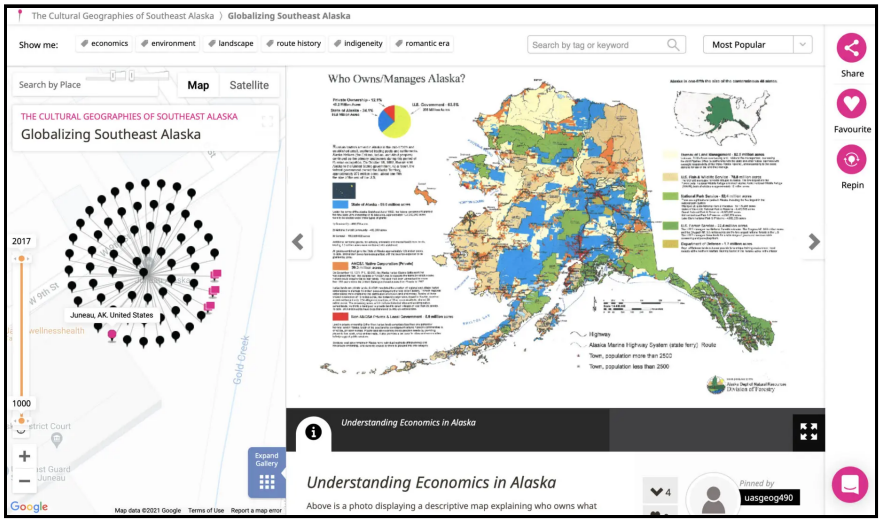
> If cruise ships won't follow laws put in place by state, federal, and international governments then why would they ever listen to small non-profit organization raising a stink about them dumping pollution into the ocean?; How do you maintain a thriving economic industry to be completely sustainable in a cultural and environmentally rich region of the world?; What would happen if we created a more complex narrative than "the last frontier"?[69]

In formulating such questions, students began to create collective interpretive frameworks of their city. For example, linking environmental pollution, land appropriation, health care issues, and racial and economic inequalities across history generated a critical perspective on the present moment as an extension of historic inequalities within the region. At this point, the negation of the cartographic grid is not simply an ideological stance advocating the local over the global, or place over space, but expresses a new value in its own right, one that establishes a differentiated, regional, colonial history through tactical and tactile construction. Several students reframed these contemporary inequalities in terms that they originally thought to be part of Alaska's past. One reflected,

> What I found the most shocking from this group's research is how cruise ship tourism is a form of neocolonialism that is exploiting communities it benefits from. It is not just degrading the environment around it but also the cultures of these communities and rewriting the narrative or history of the places to benefit the stereotypical assumptions created by outside forces like tourists. . . . Through this project I began to understand how effective tourism was in altering, rewriting, and hiding this history.[70]

Another student writes, "ironically on the heels of the end of classic colonialism, we see the rise of international commerce and the birth of what we now call globalism."[71] Thus, as students pinned the various means in which ecological and geopolitical changes are brought on by the cruise ships, each citation or siting was juxtaposed and therefore spatially linked to nearby pins addressing other historical occurrences such as the displacement of villages and land dispossession in Alaska's colonial era. Students expressed concern about the long-term impacts of environmental exploitation, and the ecological changes brought by the cruise ships emerged as indissociable from its colonial environments and memories, as the mapping process forcefully aligned these material and ideological continuities embedded in the region and challenged any desire to bracket the ongoing process of colonization out from the urgencies of climate change and economic sovereignty. The visual spatial tactic of shared knowledge collaborations revealed how historic, social, and spatial processes manifest themselves in contemporary forms, and the colonial legacy of Alaska became an active collective interpretive frame that enabled a critical regional history to make its presence felt. The production of the map became a fulcrum in which oppositional forces constructed a location in which an extended space and extended temporality marked a newly differentiated "neocolonial" region for students.

Synesthetic use of places on the map illustrates one last kind of visual spatial tactic. Students began placing pins regarding cruise ship industry practices—such as promotional brochures, state legislation, and public policy—at the site of the Federal Building, and this became the location with the largest number of pins (see Figure 7).[72]



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Figure-7.pdf-Rich-Simpson.jpg>

Figure 7. In locating multiple pins < https://www.historypin.org/en/cultural-geography-of-southeast-alaska/globalizing-southeast-alaska/geo/58.301944,-134.419722,19/bounds/58.301518,-134.421346,58.30237,-134.418098/paging/1/pin/1071014/state/hybr at the State Federal Building in Juneau, students direct attention to this point on the map and synecdochically inscribe this location to emphasize the significance of the state's role in fortifying multinational capital on the landscape.

In this usage we find a cartographic spatial swelling or amplification of meaning, so much so that this space on the map is assigned figurative meaning. The federal building located at 700 Post Street functions for this group of students as a synecdoche of the nation-state. The students' need to tactically create such a space teaches users to become aware of the significance of this location and directs users' attention to this site on the map. Students inscribe this location with a figural quality to emphasize the state's active role in fortifying multinational capital onto the Juneau landscape, prioritizing cruise ship development over social services in southeast Alaska, as if employment were the only necessity for life. By collectively engaging in this figural practice, students shift senses in which they make meaning with the digital map by utilizing the interface's representation of a literal location (700 Post Street) now as a figural representation of the nation-state. The students direct attention away from its meaning as a static signifier and instead utilize synecdoche to designate the impact of the convergence of nation-state polity with the interests of multinational capital, and in doing so, create their own map of meaning for a receiving audience. If measured against the imperatives of cartographic convention, this figural practice risks being identified as incorrectly placing pins that should perhaps be located in Washington D.C. However, by attending to these pins as a visual spatial tactic, that is by noting the authors' intention to conjoin state and corporate practices and to use visual objects to alert users of this particular alignment, we become aware of the way this particular group of students' collaborative regional map-making reveals their own pedagogic practice which would otherwise be ignored, unnoticed, or deemed inaccurate.[73] It is important to note that these students are well aware of the decisions of the state legislature on the survival of their university, ferry system, and state resources in general, and therefore locating pins addressing the commercialization of the landscape onto the federal building exemplifies a cartographic modification that recombines multi-scaled regional rhetorics of Juneau through a synecdochic practice that emphasizes the material and social consequences of neoliberal state policies. In doing so, southeast Alaska doesn't simply appear, but the past, present, and future is creatively and critically experienced by students as though for the first time.

The Production of Space as a Pedagogic Practice

The regional rhetoric of survival in the wilderness took on renewed meaning within the collaborative space of the Globalizing Southeast Alaska course. Students began to view the urban environment as an arena of contestation in which competing social forces and

interests—from transnational firms, developers, state and federal government to workers, businesses, and the homeless—all struggle over urban design, land use, and public space. My students utilized visual spatial tactics to produce a social analysis of southeast Alaska and then exhibited this analysis in public. The final project exists as an ongoing public discourse that can be accessed by anyone and remains open for collaboration and feedback from the community and the world.[74] By doing so, they created a form of vernacular criticism through which they began to understand themselves as political subjects who collectively mobilized to develop shared knowledge capable of generating critical insights and interpretive frameworks about their surroundings and their place in the world. Yet visual spatial tactics emerge here not simply from collaborating with each other, but rather from the site-specific way students engage the interactive functions of producing a spatial history of southeast Alaska. As such, they identify how learning involves an enactment, a performance, and an embodiment over and beyond cognitive reflection. In addition to facilitating an interactive space in which individuals can foster collaborative frameworks of shared knowledge and critical insights that mobilize politicized subjectivities, visual spatial tactics contribute to the formation of a critical regionalist pedagogy capable of conjoining the regional rhetorics of space with the contemporary processes of interurban globalization typified by the cruise ship city.[75]

Critical regionalism's strength lies in reopening and transfiguring this relationship between the differentiated experiences of a particular place and the standardizations and placeless-making forces of corporate hegemony in such a way that outsmarts the latter and uses tactile, tactical, and technological production as a means to unveil the site itself, including its particular ideological and material practices. In a final reflection paper, one student indicates this process by identifying the cruise ship as the primary pedagogue of southeast Alaska:

> I have learned a lot about myself from this project. This has really opened my eyes to the place in which I have lived my whole life. I have accessed new connections and understandings about indigenous peoples, economics, politics, and ecosystems here in my hometown. Ironically, the cruise tourism industry has made this interconnectedness very apparent and noticeable in my life and surroundings.[76]

To grasp the cruise ship industry as a producer of both urban space and self-identity enables a relational theory of the cruise ship city that is both specific and generalizable, located and dislocated, material and discursive. Indeed, the allegorical structure of critical regionalism permits each enactment to mobilize practices away from where its effects are felt, to be honed, appropriated, and reorganized accordingly. Any geopolitical potential of a critical regionalist pedagogy as a progressive aesthetic toward building spaces that permit us to teach and learn—a challenge now confronting all cruise ship cities that hope to avoid acts of survival from determining their own discursive and material spaces—relies on this varied adoption and translation into other local, social, and cultural practices aimed at securing a relational sense of autonomy in an era in which global industries make "interconnectedness very apparent and noticeable." As a contribution to advancing critical regionalism as a pedagogical practice, Globalizing Southeast Alaska contains the possibility of expanding its political efficacy through its coordinated development in conjunction with the regional rhetorics of other cruise ship cities around the world as well as other neoliberal forms of urbanization.

In response to the call for "the right to nature" that emerged in the 1960s as a result of the perceived development of widespread alienating urban spaces, Henri Lefebvre instead demanded "the right to the city" as the reinvention of urbanization as a scientific, social, and artistic practice capable of producing identity and collectivity as a revolutionary humanist practice. Given the decisive role of knowledge production to contemporary globalized urbanization it becomes vital to not only identify a critical regionalist pedagogy that engages the production of space, but to grasp the production of space itself as a pedagogical practice. How exactly is your region produced—discursively, materially, emotionally—and how does this particular formation order the perceptions, desires, and energies from which you have no option but to learn?

Notes

1. Karen Schwartz, "As Global Warming Thaws Northwest Passage, a Cruise Sees Opportunity," *New York Times*, July 6, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/10/travel/arctic-cruise-northwest-passage-greenpeace.html.

2. Research has emerged in "climate tourism," "doom tourism," and "last chance tourism," which Lemelin identifies as terms that broaden the field of dark tourism to include travel experiences motivated by the desire to encounter the death or extinction of non-human or nature-based tragedies of the anthropocene. See Harvey Lemelin et al., "Last Chance Tourism: the boom, doom, and gloom of visiting vanishing destinations," *Current Issues in Tourism* 13, no. 4 (September 2010): 477–493. On dark tourism see, J. J. Lennon and M. Foley, *Dark Tourism* (New York: Continuum, 2000). On extinction tourism, see Michael Byers, "Arctic Cruises: Fun for Tourists, Bad for the Environment," *Globe and Mail*, April 18, 2016, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/arctic-cruises-great-for-tourists-bad-for-the-environment/article29648307/. In June of 2019, *Transport and Environment* released a report showing that nitrogen oxide emissions from cruise ships in Europe was equivalent to only 15 percent of that emitted by *all* of Europe's automobiles in one year. "One Corporation to Pollute them All: Luxury Cruise Emissions in Europe," *Transport and Environment*, June 2019, https://www.transportenvironment.org/publications/one-corporation-pollute-them-all.

3. The *Crystal Serenity* offers a $600 shore excursion package to passengers entitled "Study in Global Warming" that includes a 250-mile round-trip flight to Shishmaref, Alaska, a village of 580 that is being lost to rising sea levels. The term *critical pedagogy* is first used in Henry Giroux's 1983 essay "Theory and Resistance in Education"; however, the practice emerges from a long historical legacy of educational movements that aspired to link classroom practices to democratic principles of society and specifically to the interest of oppressed communities. For an account of the particularly American tradition of critical pedagogy and its key figures see Maxine Greene, "In Search of a Critical Pedagogy," *Harvard Education Review* 56, no. 4 (November 1986): 427–441.

4. Crystal Global Public Relations, Crystal Cruises, *Crystal Cruises' Service and Onboard Enrichment Win in Porthole's Readers' Choice Awards*, Press Release, November 18, 2019, https://mediacenter.crystalcruises.com/crystal-cruises-service-and-onboard-enrichment-win-in-portholes-readers-choice-awards/. The Cruise Web, *Crystal Cruises Onboard Activities*, accessed June 2020, https://cruiseweb.com/cruise-lines/crystal-ocean-cruises/experience-onboard-activities.

5. Tom Stieghorst, "Forging Fulfillment," *Travel Weekly*, November 5, 2018, https://www.travelweekly.com/Cruise-Travel/Forging-fulfillment-Cruise-lines-bolster-enrichment-programs#article.

6. Semester At Sea, https://www.semesteratsea.org.

7. Bob Jessop, "Cultural Political Economy, the Knowledge-Based Economy, and the State," in *The Technology Economy*, ed. Andrew Barry and Don Slater (London: Routledge, 2005); Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Volume 1: The Rise of the Network Society* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996); Enrico Deiaco, Alan Hughes, and Maureen McKelvey, "Universities as Strategic Anchors in the Knowledge Economy," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 36, no. 3 (May 2012): 525–541.

8. On democracy's reliance on affordable and accessible education see Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015). The dismantling of the public university is the subject of much academic energy. See Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty Year Assault on the Middle Class* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Colleen Nye, Christopher Newfield, and James Vernon, eds., "The Humanities and the Crisis of The Public University," special issue, *Representations* 116, no. 1 (2011); Christopher Newfield, *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2018).

9. Christopher Newfield's dialectic approach to the mid-century American university's institutionalization of humanism situates its practice as a historically specific theory of professional middle-class possibilities in the era of industrialization. This structural analysis of humanism within post-war academic and industrial settings thereby presents the significant political rediscovery that alongside its conservative legacy, liberal humanism also preserved within itself radical standards for developing human potential which at times, "persisted, and still persists, to unsettle professional and managerial life, often acting as a critical or antagonist position, jostling its institutional superior, the technosciences, while drawing on radical and noncapitalist traditions." Christopher Newfield, *Ivy and Industry: Business and the Making of the American University, 1880-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 47. On "racial liberalism," which frames antiracial discourse as an organizing strategy for US capitalist hegemony following the war and enables institutions like the American university to idealize, imagine, and anticipate but never achieve their espoused egalitarian and liberal values see, Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

10. In the process, public universities increased part-time academic labor, online instruction, and reduced general education requirements, subsequently cheapening costs, purging liberal arts curriculums, and weakening faculty governance. Neoliberalism describes a governing rationale capable of disseminating market values to all spheres of human life. Its economic features include the liberalization of government restrictions on market competition, weakening of the welfare state, and consolidation of flexible, specialized models of production, industrial organization and inter-firm relations regionally disseminated to intensify the globalization of capital. See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990); Aiwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logic of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

11. On biometric organizational studies, see Taemie Kim et al, "Sociometric Badges: Using Sensor Technology to Capture New Forms of Collaboration" *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 33 (2012): 412–427; On quantified selves see Deborah Lupton, *The Quantified Self* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016); On smart cities see, Ayona Datta and Nancy Odendaal, "Smart Cities and the Banality of Power" *Society and Space* 37, no. 3 (2017): 387–392; On parametric urbanism, see Patrik Schumacher, ed., *Parametricism 2.0: Rethinking Architecture's Agenda for the 21st Century* (London: Wiley, 2016). On the historical rise of the university as an anchor for state-sponsored regional economic development, see Margaret O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Enrico Delaco, Alan Hughes, and Maureen McKelvey, "Universities as Strategic Actors in the Knowledge Economy" *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 36, no. 3 (2012): 525–541.

12. Simonetta Armondi and Stefano Di Vita, ed., *New Urban Geographies of the Creative and Knowledge Economies: Foregrounding Innovative Productions, Workplaces and Public Policies in Contemporary Cities* (London: Routledge 2018); Casey M Lindberg et al., "Effects of Office Workstation Type on Physical Activity and Stress." *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 75, no. 10 (2018).

13. Annalee Saxenian, *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). On the unique urban forms arising from the cultural "deterritorialization" of land and earth through speculation and finance capital, see Fredric Jameson, "Culture and Finance Capital" T*he Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998* (London: Verso, 1998).

14. Here I follow Katharyne Mitchell's assertion that globalization and neoliberalism have placed "new pressures on the state from scales without and within the nation, and thus the education of national citizens in connection with both state formation and political economy, must now be considered within this global framework." Katharyne Mitchell, "Educating the National Citizen in Neoliberal Times: From the Multicultural Self to the Strategic Cosmopolitan." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28, no. 4 (December 2003): 391.

15. I use the term cruise ship city to refer to the set of spatial practices in which a local population is annually outnumbered by seasonal tourists via cruise ship ports-of-call, resulting in the development of urban environments built specifically to accommodate this transient population for entertainment, educational, and economic purposes. Current examples include Venice, Cozumel, and the Caribbean islands. For a recent documentary on the social impact of cruise ships on urban space see *The Venice Syndrome*. dir. Andreas Pichler (2012).

16. Lefebvre emphasizes the significance of this point further in *The Production of Space*: "A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses." Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 54.

17. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 50. Cognitive mapping is of course one of many pedagogical tools proposed by Jameson. Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Carey Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (University of Illinois Press, 1990), 347–360.

18. Doreen Massey, "Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place," in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, ed. Jon Bird et al. (London: Routledge, 1993).

19. Neil Smith shows that the category of scale is not simply to identify the ideas at work within a particular level of analysis, nor even the lateral relations between the body, home, community, city, region, nation, and globe, but rather how interpretations of scale function to shape and constitute each other. See Neil Smith, "Homeless/Global: Scaling Places," in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures/Global Change*, ed. John Bird, Barry Curtis, George Robertson, and Lisa Tucker (New York: Routledge, 1993).

20. See for example, Neil Campbell, "Critical Regionalism, Thirdspace, and John Brinckerhoff Jackson's Western Cultural Landscapes" in *Postwestern Cultures: Literature, Theory, and Space*, ed. Susan Kollin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Rachel C. Jackson, "Locating Oklahoma: Critical Regionalism and Tranrhetorical Analysis in the Composition Classroom" CCC 66, no. 2 (December 2014), 301–326; Douglas Reichert Powell, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

21. Barbara Allen, "On Performative Regionalism," in *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, and Tradition*, ed. Vincent B. Canizaro (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007).

22. Allen, "On Performative Regionalism," 421.

23. Ananya Roy, "The 21st-Century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory," *Regional Studies*, 43, no. 6 (July 2009): 820.

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New Press, 1998), 17–34; Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 129–205.

25. In its celebration of the provincial, neoregionalism imagines itself opposed to the homogenizing sterility of corporate gentrification processes. Ursula K. Heise traces the origin of this intensification of libidinal and political investment in the local as a site of resistance to the 1960s, where autonomy and self-sufficiency were championed as a political commitment to one place, while mobility and nomadism were rejected as the deterritorializing practices of "large-scale, abstract, and often invisible networks of authority, expertise, and exchange that structure modern societies." Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2008), 31–38.

26. Frampton, "Towards," 27.

27. Jameson, Seeds, 195–200.

28. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979). Edward Said identifies imaginative geographies as those that arise from a poetic process whereby seemingly vacant and anonymous reaches of distant space acquire emotional and rational meaning.

29. Jason J. Moore, "The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 3 (March 2017), 594–630.

30. On the necessity to broaden theories of urbanization beyond developmental models, see Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Modernity and Development* (London: Routledge, 2006).

31. Cruise Lines International Association reported 27.8 million passengers in 2019 and an annual revenue of 41.6 billion dollars. The global estimation is on average 1.36 million new passengers every year. In Alaska, for the third year in a row from 2016 to 2019, the number of passengers set a new record with 1,233,735 passengers. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, CLIA forecasted an increase of 7.4% for the 2020 season. ("2020 Cruise Trends and Industry Outlook," Cruise Lines International Association, 2020). Only three Alaskan cities have a population over 10,000.

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33. State report on the economic impact of cruise ships, 2017: https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/ded/DEV/TourismDevelopment/TourismResearch.aspx; "Promoting Alaska and Upgraded Infrastructure Needed for Continued Industry Growth," Cruise Lines International Association Alaska, https://akcruise.org/about-clia-alaska/current-issues/.; City and Borough of Juneau website on the Cruise Ship Terminal Project, http://www.juneau.org/harbors/documents/DocksHarborscruiseterminalbrochure.pdf.

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35. "CLIA 2019 North American Market Report," https://cruising.org/-/media/research-updates/research/2019-year-end/2019-north-american-market-report.ashx. This is a 20 percent increase from 2018, up from a 14 percent increase the previous year.

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37. Mike Baker, "Blindsided by a 'Devastating' Veto, Alaska's University System Pleads for a Lifeline," *New York Times*, July 7, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/07/us/alaska-university-budget-cuts.html; See also, Nathanial Herz, "After Bruising First Year, New Dunleavy Budget Trades Cuts for Big PFDs and Deficit Spending," *Alaska Public Media*, December 11, 2019, https://www.alaskapublic.org/2019/12/11/after-bruising-first-year-new-dunleavy-budget-trades-cuts-for-big-pfds-and-deficit-spending/; and more recently, Andrew Kitchenman, "Dunleavy Proposes Nearly $5,000 in Dividends in Budget that Would Cut other Spending," *KTOO*, December 11, 2020, https://www.ktoo.org/2020/12/11/dunleavy-proposes-nearly-5000-in-dividends-in-budget-that-would-cut-other-spending/.

38. Brenden Kiley, "'It's Gonna Kill this Community': A Tiny Alaska Town and Others in the State Brace as Governor Guts Budget," *Seattle Times*, August 9, 2019, https://www.seattletimes.com/life/its-gonna-kill-this-community-a-tiny-alaska-town-and-others-in-the-state-brace-as-governor-guts-budget/.

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40. Yereth Rosen, "Deep Budget Cuts Put University of Alaska in Crisis Mode Grappling with Survival," *Reuters*, July 22, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-alaska-politics/deep-budget-cuts-put-university-of-alaska-in-crisis-mode-grappling-with-survival-idUSKCN1UH2H0.

41. Susan Kollin, "Alaska, Survival Style," in *Postwestern Cultures: Literature, Theory, and Space*, ed. Susan Kollin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 143–155.

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50. Liz Keller, "No-Camping Ordinance Goes into Effect," *Juneau Empire*, April 12, 2017. Public outcry was also expressed at the city's decision to remove a monument for Alaskan fishermen lost at sea in order to make space for the Panamax docks. Emily Russo Miller, "Fishermen's Memorial loses to Panamax docks," *Juneau Empire*, September 27, 2015, https://www.juneauempire.com/news/fishermens-memorial-loses-to-panamax-docks/.

51. Jacob Resneck, "Juneau Count Identifies Homeless as Predominately Older, Alaska Native," *KTOO*, February 10, 2017. Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (New York: Palgrave, 2015), 9; Alyosha Goldstein, *Formations of United States Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 1–30.

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53. On suicide rate, see Center for Disease Control, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/suicide-mortality/suicide.htm; On methamphetamine deaths see Christine Vestil, "As the opioid crisis peaks, meth and cocaine deaths explode," *Anchorage Daily News*, May 18, 2019; and Zachariah Hughes, "The Last Frontier: Inside Alaska's Meth Epidemic," *Rolling Stone*, August 9, 2018; On rape and domestic violence see Statista Research, 10 October 2019, https://www.statista.com/statistics/232563/forcible-rape-rate-in-the-us-by-state/.

54. Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 32–39.

55. De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 36.

56. Nancy Lee Peluso first identified "counter-mapping" by indigenous communities in Indonesia and the term has opened a flourishing field within indigenous studies and more recently neogeography. See for example Bjørn Sletto, "Indigenous Cartographies" *Cultural Geographies* 16 (2009): 147–152; Anna J. Willow, "Doing Sovereignty in Native North America: Anishinaabe Counter-Mapping and the struggle for Land-Based Self-Determination," *Human Ecology* 41 (2013): 871–884; Kai Khiun Lieu and Natalie Pang, "Neoliberal Visions, Post-Capitalist Memories: Heritage Politics and the Counter-Mapping of Singapore's Cityscape," *Ethnography* 16, no. 3

(2015): 331–351; Toshikazu Seto and Yuichiro Nishimura, "Crisis Mapping Project and Counter-Mapping by Neogeographers," in *Japan After 3/11* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2016), 288–303; Nancy Lee Peluso, "Whose Woods Are These? Counter-Mapping Forest Territories in Kalimantan, Indonesia," *Antipode* 27, no. 4 (1995): 383–406.

57. M. Goodchild, "Citizens as Sensors: The World of Volunteered Geography," *Geojournal* 69, no. 4 (2007): 211–221.

58. Sarah Elwood and Katharyne Mitchell, "Another Politics is Possible: Neogeographies, Visual Spatial Tactics, and Political Formation" *Cartographica* 48, no. 4 (2013): 275–292.

59. Goodchild refers to those individuals and groups producing VGI as neogeographers: activists, grassroots groups, and NGOs utilize interactive online mapping technologies for various social, political, or personal use such as connecting diasporic communities, disseminating counter-narratives, or mobilizing events.

60. Two of the students arrived on campus from Arizona and California to acquire an education enriched by the specific environment of Alaska.

61. Quotation from final reflection paper shared with permission by the author. Students who co-created the project wrote final reflection papers on the project in May 2017 and they have provided permission for these to be shared. Some have made their complete final reflections public through pins posted on the website where indicated below.

62. Regionalization refers to the ephemeral process by which regions create a shared sense of space beyond a common geographic location. See Andrew Wood, "Regionalization and the Construction of Ephemeral Co-Location," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2012): 289–296.

63. Student co-creator, final reflection paper, May 2017.

64. See "CLIA Alaska Challenges Juneau Passenger Entry Fee, Cites $10 million Artificial Island Project as Unconstitutional" CLIA-Alaska, April 12, 2016, accessed June 10th, 2020, https://akcruise.org/2016/04/press-release-clia-alaska-challenges-juneau-passenger-entry-fee-cites-10-million-artificial-island-project-as-unconstitutional/. Jacob Resneck, "Cruise industry's Juneau lawsuit could set wider precedent," KTOO, November 1, 2017, https://www.ktoo.org/2017/11/01/cruise-industrys-juneau-lawsuit-set-wider-precedent/. In December 2018, Federal Judge H. Russel Holland issued a thirty-five-page report ruling in favor of the city's legal right to collect fees, yet accepted CLIA's arguments that the fees need to be connected to the vessel. "Whereas a gangplank used by passengers and the general public is a service to a vessel, sidewalk repairs and access to the public library's internet, which passengers share with the general public, are unlikely to be a service to a vessel." Cruise Lines International Association of Alaska and Cruise Lines International Association vs. City and Borough of Juneau, Alaska (United States District Court for the District of Alaska, 15 April 2016); Jacob Resneck. "Ruling Limits How Juneau Can Spend Cruise Passenger Fees," KTOO, December 6, 2018, https://www.ktoo.org/2018/12/06/ruling-limits-how-juneau-can-spend-cruise-passenger-fees/.

65. Student co-creator, final reflection paper, May 2017.

66. Katie Rogers, "Princess Cruise Lines to Pay $40 Million Fine for Illegal Dumping," *New York Times*, December 2, 2016. The fines incurred are much less expensive than the cost of properly disposing waste. And yet passing regulations to enforce ships to properly handle waste remains difficult given the monopolization of the industry.

67. *One Corporate to Pollute them All: Luxury Cruise air Emissions in Europe* (Brussels: Transportation and Environment, June 2019), https://www.transportenvironment.org/sites/te/files/publications/One%20Corporation%20to%20Pollute%20Them%2(

68. Student co-creator, "A Reflection on my Research," May 2017, https://www.historypin.org/en/cultural-geography-of-southeast-alaska/globalizing-southeast-alaska/geo/58.383595,-134.639515,16/bounds/58.379956,-134.643706,58.387234,-134.635323/paging/1/pin/1073

69. Questions assembled from multiple student reflection papers, May 2017: "A Reflection on My Research," https://www.historypin.org/en/cultural-geography-of-southeast-alaska/globalizing-southeast-alaska/geo/58.383595,-134.639515,16/bounds/58.379956,-134.643706,58.387234,-134.635323/paging/1/pin/1073 "Economic Distribution Research Overview," https://www.historypin.org/en/cultural-geography-of-southeast-alaska/globalizing-southeast-alaska/geo/58.383595,-134.639515,16/bounds/58.379956,-134.643706,58.387234,-134.635323/paging/1/pin/1073 "The Different Faces of Southeast Alaska," https://www.historypin.org/en/cultural-geography-of-southeast-alaska/globalizing-southeast-alaska/geo/58.383595,-134.639515,16/bounds/58.379956,-134.643706,58.387234,-134.635323/paging/1/pin/1073

70. Student co-creator, "A Reflection on my Research," May 2017, https://www.historypin.org/en/cultural-geography-of-southeast-alaska/globalizing-southeast-alaska/geo/58.383595,-134.639515,16/bounds/58.379956,-134.643706,58.387234,-134.635323/paging/1/pin/1073

71. Student co-creator, final reflection paper, May 2017.

72. Students composed a total of seventy-five analytic pins onto the project over the course of the semester.

73. By guiding users' interactions within the geomedia platform and shaping the meaning of a represented space, students' usage of the federal building demonstrates Elwood and Leszcyynski's concept of "framing." Sarah Elwood and Agnieszka Leszczynski, "New Spatial Media, New Knowledge Politics," *Transactions of the British Geographers* 94, no. 1 (2013): 544–549.

74. Historypin is not the only platform that permits creative engagement with cartographic production. Yet Historypin's capability to engage history and geography as well as to collaborate on a group project make it an ideal platform for providing an open public resource siting multiple forms of knowledge that can be used as a performative teaching tool to map place-based negotiations with larger global hegemonic strategies, relations, and histories as a critical pedagogical practice. Historypin, https://www.historypin.org/en/.

75. Where information is limited, the website itself becomes a political act. The website's status as an ongoing project, inviting public commentary and continual pinning, also opens the possibility for the interface to capture relational social processes as they unfold within other spaces and times. Student reflection essays addressed some of the ways in which the project will reverberate in other political contexts: "Through researching the economic distribution, I realized that Alaska has been taken full advantage of by a system that does not prioritize the importance of community and the health of the environment. I have found a new love for understanding economics of regions and I feel it is important now to educate others of what the system is and how they might play a role in the system." Student co-creator, final reflection paper, May 2017.

76. Student co-creator, final reflection paper, May 2017.

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"A Program of Complete Disorder": The Black Iconoclasm Within Fanonian Thought

by Charles Athanasopoulos | Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT This essay examines the scholarship of revolutionary theorist Frantz Fanon and the debate surrounding his conception of decolonization and "new humanism." Across a multitude of fields, Black and cultural studies among them, Fanon has been heralded as an iconic thinker who offers us a path toward an alternative humanity. Working against the grain of this popular form of Fanonism, I suggest that there is a Black iconoclasm—a deep desire to unsettle the very rendering of a systematic path toward decolonization—that pervades Fanonian thought. Accordingly, the essay examines and unsettles various forms of Fanonism by suggesting that their teleological narratives of redemption ultimately end up serving anti-Fanonian pursuits. Through an extended meditation on Fanon's claim that decolonization is "a program of complete disorder," I explore what it might mean to embrace a Black iconoclastic approach to Fanon and the pursuit of Black liberation.

KEYWORDS Black studies, cultural studies, decolonial, Frantz Fanon, iconography, new humanism

In considering the legacy and impact of Frantz Fanon, cultural theorist Stuart Hall once remarked that *The Wretched of the Earth* is "the Bible of the decolonization movement."[1] On one hand, Hall's statement points to the fact that Fanon's corpus speaks to questions about one's cosmology and the struggle against the evils of anti-Black colonialism. On the other hand, we might ask if this labeling of Fanon's book as "the Bible" speaks to the attempt to map out a vision of the world beyond this one. This second aspect of Hall's statement might thus be read as risking the replication of anti-Fanonian pursuits: namely, the pursuit of a teleological vision of Black liberation which breeds formulaic blueprints rather than a commitment to chaotic invention. Whereas one might argue that Fanon's scholarship offers us a vision of a world cleansed of colonialism, this essay considers elements of Fanon's scholarship that indicate a desire to unsettle the very formation of a "Bible of decolonization" in favor of theorizing decolonization as "a program of complete disorder."[2]

There have been multiple attempts to map the various phases and interpretations of Fanonism, each of them implicitly claiming the superiority of their own interpretations. There are too many Fanonisms to fully encapsulate within the scope of this essay; some might prefer to base their interpretations on Cedric Robinson's warnings about appropriations of Fanon's corpus or Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renee T. White's edited collection, *Fanon: A Critical Reader*.[3] Others might prefer Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s "critical Fanonism" or Nigel C. Gibson's "authentic Fanon."[4] In lieu of a chronological excavation of these different Fanonisms, this essay considers what Black and ethnic studies scholar Reiland Rabaka's calls the five major interlocking forms of Fanonism within contemporary scholarship.[5] "Antiracist Fanonism" emphasizes Fanon's

existential phenomenology of race and his contributions to critical race theory. "Decolonialist Fanonism," emphasizes Fanon's thoughts on revolutionary violence and his divergence from the cultural nationalism and vanguardism of Césaire. "Marxist Fanonism" emphasizes Fanon's expansion of Marxist study of the political economy to more fully consider the implications of racialized colonialism. "Feminist Fanonism" emphasizes the essential, yet oftentimes contradictory, contributions Fanon makes to feminism, womanism, and women's studies. "Revolutionary humanist Fanonism," which Rabaka most closely aligns with, emphasizes an examination of Fanon's concept of "new humanism" in order to explicate what it is and the viable solutions it might offer toward the struggle for decolonization. Building on Gordon and Rabaka, I am concerned with the "disciplinary decadence" which refers to the process of critical decay within a discipline or a field of thought emerging within debates about Fanon.[6] Disciplinary decadence reveals how the search for iconic interpretations of Fanon potentially stifles more nuanced and open conversations about his corpus. Rather than allowing arbitrary disciplinary rules and theoretical customs to render differing interpretations null and void in service of being right, what if we engaged in a critical commitment to challenging all attempts to produce an iconic narrative of redemption from a Fanonian perspective? How do we do the critical work of self-reflection to consider how we, as interdisciplinary scholars engaging Fanon, might produce our own teleological narratives?

This question about Fanon and disciplinary decadence has particular importance for cultural studies. Indeed, questions about the potentially dangerous appropriations of Fanon's scholarship raised by Cedric Robinson in 1993 have been a central focus of cultural studies scholars such as Anthony Alessandrini, Rey Chow, E. San Juan Jr., Homi K. Bhabha, and Gibson, who explore Fanon's importance to thinking about cultural identification, nationalism, and post-structuralist theory.[7] Confirming Fanon's importance to the Birmingham school, Hall went as far to claim that Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* is "one of the most startling, staggering, important books in this field [of cultural studies]" because it opens up a discussion about the lived experience of culture, the way colonizers attempt to control difference, and how one might anticipate and/or inspire transformations in culture.[8] Engaging with these thinkers, I ask, how might Fanon's theory of decolonization as a "program of complete disorder" help us interrogate and dismantle anti-Black colonial culture? How does Fanon help us pursue something beyond this world? Whereas many Black and cultural studies scholars are interested in performances of culture and agency that offer a space of life in the midst of Black abjection, afropessimism via Fanon reminds us of the "species division" between white and Black that structures the whole of those interactions.[9] As Wilderson reminds us, there is no "redemption" to be had in an anti-Black world.[10] It is important to note that Fanon's program of complete disorder is aimed at shattering not simply the anti-Black cosmos but also rigid visions of Black revolution. Perhaps the most famous example of this fact is Fanon's shattering of Aimé Césaire's iconic *Negritude*. While they were indeed friends and interlocutors, Fanon became increasingly frustrated with Césaire's investment in cultural nationalism and vanguardism.[11] For Fanon, this political model of Black revolution simply erected a new iconic vision of Black culture that was rooted in a desire to prove to the white world that Black people are civilized. Beyond that, Fanon was concerned that Césaire's embracement of vanguardism would reproduce elitist divisions between charismatic leaders and the people which would come at the expense of the masses; thus, even if the colonized might achieve political and economic independence from the colonizer through the embracement of *Negritude*, the psychological internalization of white colonial values would still remain.[12]

While different in content, Fanon believed that Césaire's *Negritude* still shared in a limited *form* of iconography that stifles true radical invention in favor of a redemptive telos. Fanon's criticism of Césaire's *Negritude* is mirrored by other debates in cultural studies about the interlocking relationship between acts of icon destruction and icon creation. A notable example might be found in cultural and religious studies scholar Michael Taussig's "Iconoclasm Dictionary," which examines how the destruction of one icon might unintentionally produce a new icon of worship.[13] This, I argue, is not dissimilar from Fanon's criticisms of Césaire; while Césaire was attempting to smash the icon of Western Man, this Black iconoclastic spirit was undercut by the desire to establish a counter-icon worthy of veneration in the form of *Negritude*. Moreover, it is not dissimilar from the debates happening about Fanon's corpus and the rush by some scholars to crown their work the proper and authentic reading of these Biblical Fanonian texts. While these scholars might intend to rescue Fanon from dangerous appropriations, we might ask whether they risk pursuing an anti-Fanonian agenda by converting Fanon's theory of decolonization into a systematic program that offers a blueprint to an alternative humanity. It is this dangerous slippage between iconoclasm and icon creation that leads Taussig to question whether iconoclasm has become a dated project, since "you smash [the icons] and—lo and behold!—they have become icons [yet again]."[14] Yet, as I demonstrate throughout this essay, not all iconoclasms are created equal; while some forms of iconoclasm (e.g. Césaire's *Negritude*) might be enacted in service of a redemptive telos, I consider how Fanon's program of complete disorder might hold within it a kind of Black iconoclastic orientation that is necessarily anti-telos and ritually committed to the chaotic unsettling of the anti-Black world through the antagonism and refusal of its icons. It is within this chaos that we might be able to apprehend what Fanon means by invention.

This essay attunes scholars to the "Black iconoclasm" that resides in the thinking of Frantz Fanon and afropessimist theory.[15] A Black iconoclastic interpretation of Fanon concurs with David Marriott that we cannot only reduce the Fanonian leap away from the anti-Black cosmos and subsequent space of invention to various humanisms.[16] Instead, it requires a shattering of the icon of the human; it requires us to take a leap toward something that remains "radically unwritten."[17] Drawing on afropessimist scholars Frank Wilderson and Jared Sexton, I argue that we might approach this attempt at invention through the demand for "the end of the world."[18] One might argue that calling for the end of the world is a telos in of itself. However, the Black iconoclasm within Fanonian thought demonstrates an important distinction between demanding the end of the intolerable conditions of the anti-Black world and the attempt to map out a teleological understanding of the world that comes after. Moving beyond the diagnosis of the anti-Black world as unethical, my theory of Black iconoclasm pushes the reader to consider what it might mean to bring the afropessimist theory of ending the world into the realm of everyday practice. In this sense, this essay thinks about what it means to engage in a ritual orientation of chaos that is not governed by a rigid method and does not have a teleological vision of the world beyond this one. The question facing the reader is: what does it mean to commit oneself to the destruction of this anti-Black world, not through the replication of a rigid iconic model of Black resistance, but instead as a life-long, messy, non-linear, process that will inevitably be riddled with failures? How can we hold steadfast to this commitment despite new emerging icons that promise redemption?

In what follows, I engage the work of scholars such as Rabaka and Marriott who trace the various approaches to Fanon's corpus as it relates to Black and cultural studies. Then, I draw on Marriott and afropessimist scholars to challenge these dominant forms of Fanonism. In particular, I explore how the criticisms levied at afropessimism by scholars

who take up the "revolutionary humanist" form of Fanonism, such as Lewis Gordon, Greg Thomas, Achille Mbembe, and Annie Olaloku-Teriba, reproduce disciplinary decadence.[19] Finally, I turn to an examination of the afropessimist turn in Fanonism through scholars such as Frank Wilderson, Jared Sexton, Fred Moten, and Calvin Warren. I explore some of the differences between these theorists, including their respective theories of "afropessimism," "black mysticism," and "black nihilism" that emerge within this broader afropessimist turn.[20] I conclude with a consideration of how Black iconoclasm places the demand for the end of the world into the realm of everyday practice through an engagement with Black feminist scholar Christina Sharpe's notion of "wake work."[21]

Fanon as Icon: Cultural Studies & Popular Forms of Fanonism

There is a Black iconoclasm pervading Fanonian thought that challenges the cosmology of the anti-Black world. Cosmology (*κοσμολογία*) broadly refers to the study of (*λογία*) how one orders the world (*κόσμος*). While discussions of cosmology often times pertain to scientific and/or religious debates about the nature and origin of our universe, it can also broadly refer to how certain cultures create their own unique understandings of the world that subsequently structure their interactions. As it pertains to Fanon, my discussion of cosmology can be understood as a reference to the values of a white colonial world that have been violently imposed upon Black and colonized people. As Black feminist scholar Sylvia Wynter explains, this cosmology is partially rooted in a colonial interpretation of Christianity that is taken up by conquistadors (e.g., Christopher Columbus) to argue that God has created the Earth "on behalf of" (*propter nos*) Western Man who is compelled to bring the rest of mankind into proper Christian life.[22] Even as the explicit reliance on God has fallen to the wayside, secular Western culture continues to rely on a violent ordering of the world which privileges, in Fanonian terms, "white masks" over "Black skin" and "colonizer" over "colonized." This anti-Black cosmos comes to be represented through a complex system of iconography (*εικονογραφία*) which refers to the writing and/or representation (*γραφία*) of an image (*εἰκών*) that either already resembles *our* likeness or we should strive to resemble. Of course, *our* likeness refers to the likeness of Western Man; thus, Black and colonized folk come to fetishize white skin, white colonial cultures, and white colonial languages, always attempting to bend and mold ourselves into nearly resembling what this anti-Black culture identifies as being of value. It is this internalization of a white concept of self that Fanon so rigorously attempts to shatter through his writing and clinical practice.

Fanon's Black iconoclasm strikes at the heart of questions about cultural identification. For example, the scholars invested in the antiracist form of Fanonism are precisely interested in how Fanon speaks to the everyday psychological impact that white colonial iconography has on Black people. As Hortense Spillers argues, the Black thug, the Black mammy, the Black jezebel, and more, all act as symbols within this larger anti-Black cosmology that unconsciously function through even the most liberal and well-intentioned whites.[23] There is no better example of this than Jean-Paul Sartre, who, according to Rabaka, served as a source of disappointment for Fanon due to his attempt to make *Negritude* palatable to white audiences.[24] In doing so, Fanon argued that Sartre demonstrated how white people who reflect on the lived experience of Blackness can still themselves reproduce the iconography of the anti-Black cosmos. Rabaka also places Fanon in conversation with

Charles Mills, bell hooks, and James Baldwin, who have all explored what it might look like if Black people began to articulate their experiences with, and their anger toward, this white supremacist structure.[25] In this sense, debates surrounding Fanon's corpus highlight an attempt to shatter Black and colonized people's identification with white colonial culture in favor of inventing something new.

Similarly, the decolonialist form of Fanonism is concerned with Fanon's theory of racialized colonialism and his critique of cultural nationalism and vanguardism. Scholars such as Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Darrel Wanzer-Serrano are just two examples of decolonial scholars who engage Fanonian thought.[26] In Fanon, they find a thinker who articulates a struggle of the colonized against coloniality, the deep and lasting relationships and structures initiated by the original act of colonialism, which serves as the foundation of Western modernity. Additionally, they find in Fanon a call for the colonized to epistemically de-link themselves from colonial thought in favor of an alternative humanity built on decolonial love. Additionally, Fanon's critiques of the cultural nationalism and vanguardism of Césaire's *Negritude* are important for considering how the values of racialized colonialism can be internalized even when the colonized are able to claim political and economic independence. An important lesson can be gleaned here: just because you've posed a challenge to the cosmology of Western Man does not mean that you have escaped its grasp. Indeed, for Fanon, Césaire's *Negritude* is an example of how certain forms of iconoclasm can ultimately become thwarted in service of a redemptive telos rooted in the iconography of an anti-Black cosmos.

Bhabha exemplifies a postcolonialist reading of Fanon that is concerned with racialized colonialism on the level of everyday cultural identifications and interactions. In reading Fanon alongside Lacanian psychoanalysis, Bhabha finds that the power of Fanon lies in his ability to trace the cultural alienation of the colonized through everyday language, desires, and assumptions and to name this alienation as the center of how the Enlightenment category of "Man" and its "order of reality" is established.[27] In this order of reality, the colonized find themselves stuck between an identification with white colonial iconography and their desire to be liberated from its violence. Bhabha thus reads Fanon as similarly caught up in this kind of ambivalence regarding white colonial culture and even attempts to correct Fanon's engagements with Lacan through his own psychoanalytic thinking. A distinct, yet related, form of "critical Fanonism" espoused by Gates praises Bhabha for taking up Fanon alongside post-structuralist theory, referring to him as Fanon's "closest reader."[28] Interestingly, Gates does not attempt to offer one particular reading of Fanon but instead wrestles with scholars' various appropriations of Fanon as an exercise for thinking about contemporary colonial discourse theory.[29] Yet, both of these thinkers have been criticized for engaging Fanon in purely academic terms that divorces Fanon's politics and clinical practice from decolonial praxis.

Marxist Fanonism, exemplified by Robinson, Gibson, and San Juan, has serious criticisms of both Bhabha and Gates' respective interpretations of Fanon that strike at the heart of the disciplinary debates about whether an analysis of culture comes at the expense of an analysis of the political economy. Robinson argues that Gates and Bhabha's emphasis on poststructuralism and psychoanalysis stifles our ability to produce a broader theory of colonialism, recolonizing Fanon in service of petit-bourgeois academics who remain uncommitted to a material analysis of the political economy and the movement toward decolonization.[30] Similarly, Gibson argues that Bhabha mocks Fanon's new humanism and desire for total revolution as utopian which results in a "domesticated Fanon" who is not driven by the pursuit of liberation.[31] San Juan explains that this reading of Fanon has

inspired "contemporary cultural studies [scholarship which] celebrates heterogeneity, flux, ambiguous hybrids, indeterminacies, accidents, and lacunae inhabiting bifurcated psyches and texts."[32] Here, we have a double-edged sword emerging; on one hand, one reading of Fanon could potentially engage in a kind of cultural nationalism and vanguardism that establishes a nostalgic Black past (*Negritude*) as a counter-icon worthy of veneration. On the other hand, we risk engaging in a kind of critical Fanonism that privileges an analysis of cultural hybridity and ambivalence that is divorced from an ethic of decolonization.

The feminist form of Fanonism is similarly invested in this debate about Fanon's importance to the disciplines of cultural studies and gender studies. Feminist and cultural theorist Rey Chow argues that the cultural studies post-structuralist approach to Fanonism has accomplished a more nuanced engagement with the subject while at the same time risking a setback insofar as this work on the subject begins to downplay the role of "structural control—of law, sovereignty, and prohibition—that underlie the subject's relation with the collective."[33] Subsequently, Chow finds an engagement with Fanon fruitful for considering questions of community and admittance in context of race and sexuality. She asks, what does Fanon tell us about how the colonized might move beyond an identification with colonial culture, and what is the role of the woman of color in this pursuit? While other feminist scholars have critiqued Fanon as anti-feminist for his critiques of Martinican feminist Mayotte Capécia, Chow believes this to be too surface level of an engagement.[34] According to Chow, it is not that Fanon does not offer the woman of color any agency in his writing but rather that Fanon can only imagine her agency through her sexuality as an object of exchange. For Chow, Fanon only reads Black women like Capécia in context of their support for the wronged sovereign that is the Black man and the potential creation of a new community or their potential betrayal of the decolonial revolution in favor of admittance into the white world.[35] Yet, feminist scholars such as Sharpley-Whiting argue that Fanon's criticism of Capécia is actually well-founded, and that many of the feminist defenses of Capécia refuse to hold her accountable for her blatant "blackfemmephobia."[36] For Sharpley-Whiting, it is Capécia who is attempting to differentiate herself from other Black people, and Black women in particular through the privileging of her mixed-race status as a ticket of admittance into the white world. Indeed, this debate highlights how Fanon's shattering of anti-Black colonial iconography might be thought of through the lens of gender and sexuality. How does Fanonian thought help us shatter icons of gender and a broader culture of blackfemmephobia? How does Fanon himself, and thinkers engaged with Fanon, risk investing in certain icons of gender that ultimately stifle radical invention?

The revolutionary humanist form of Fanonism, represented by scholars such as Gordon, Mbembe, Maldonado-Torres, Rabaka, and others, emphasizes Fanon's concept of "new humanism" as the connective piece that catalyzes "antiracist, antisexist, anticolonialist, and anticapitalist revolution."[37] For these scholars, Fanon's scholarship speaks to the creation of an alternative insurgent humanity that runs counter to Western Man. Revolutionary humanist Fanonism is invested in an analysis of the lived experience of Blackness that is both accountable to feminist critiques of Fanonian thought and offers its own correctives to orthodox Marxism, neoliberal celebrations of cultural hybridity, petit-bourgeois critical Fanonism, Césairean vanguardism, and anti-Black feminist thought. San Juan argues that this approach to Fanonian thought offers a fruitful engagement with cultural studies that can both engage in an analysis of the structures of colonialism and the everyday realm of cultural and rhetorical practices. In this sense, the revolutionary humanist form of Fanonism takes the insights of the other interlocking forms in order to create a more nuanced vision of Fanon's new humanism.

"A Program of Complete Disorder": A Black Iconoclastic Reading of Fanon's New Humanism and *Tabula Rasa*

Fanon argues that the ultimate goal of his work is a radical break from the status quo which he describes as a "new humanism," a goal that, though clear enough at first glance, has been debated by scholars for decades.[38] While the revolutionary humanist perspective is perhaps the most popular form of Fanonism in our current moment, it has been engaged in a debate with the emergent afropessimist perspective on Fanon. What remains disputed is how one defines the human and how a new humanism differs from Western Man. What tools does Fanon offer us for reaching this new humanism? Building on Rabaka and Marriott, I want to more specifically examine this debate as I suspect that a Black iconoclastic reading, like afropessimism, may be subject to rigorous critique and contestation from those who take up a revolutionary humanist form of Fanonism. While afropessimist thinkers articulate an anti-humanist understanding of Fanon and privilege the specificity of anti-Blackness, revolutionary humanist Fanonists such as Thomas and Olaloku-Teriba have launched critiques at afropessimism for a perceived misinterpretation of Fanon's corpus. They argue that Wilderson and Sexton's afropessimist interpretations of Fanon's scholarship are decontextualized and produce a grid politics that reifies the categories of Western Man as monolithic and ontological.[39] Mbembe similarly cautions us from internalizing Blackness as abjection because it destroys the possibility of accessing a new kind of humanity.[40] There are two warrants to their argument: for these scholars, afropessimism concedes that humanity belongs to Western Man and afropessimism produces an unnecessary divide between non-Black colonized people and Black people. Thomas and Olaloku-Teriba ultimately conclude that this grid politics creates a perverse interpretation of scholars like Fanon and Wynter that naturalizes a de-contextualized, academic, and neoliberal identity politics that ultimately serves colonialism.[41] Indeed, from the perspective of this revolutionary humanist interpretation of Fanon, afropessimism destroys the potential for anticolonial revolution and might even be reminiscent of Gates's critical Fanonism.

The afropessimist response, however, indicates that there is a hidden violence in approaching coalitions through the lens of a shared victimization at the hands of white people or the colonizer. Instead, Sexton argues that we must reject this "people-of-color-blindness" in favor of theorizing the color line as Black versus non-Black.[42] From the afropessimist perspective, revolutionary humanist Fanonism risks eliding the specificity of anti-Blackness and concealing the role that non-Black colonized people play in perpetuating it, in favor of emphasizing a common cause. Thus, for scholars like Sexton and Wilderson it is possible for the colonized to demand the end of colonialism while reproducing a new manifestation of anti-Blackness once they've achieved their proper status in the world. That is not to say that an analysis of colonialism or other forms of oppression aren't important and can't be reconciled with an afropessimist view, but instead to demonstrate the importance of analyzing how even the most marginalized non-Black people have the capacity to wield anti-Blackness as a means of securing their own narrative of redemption.

Moreover, afropessimism refuses the redemptive telos represented by the counter-icon of an alternative humanity. Marriott's *Whither Fanon* offers a different snapshot of Fanonian thought, outlining two dominant forms of Fanonism that he seeks to unsettle. The first

camp, the Marxist-phenomenological tradition which Marriott engages through Gordon and Ato Sekyi-Otu, considers Blackness through an existentialist lens that privileges a focus on experience, staging a kind of struggle between the violence of the anti-Black world and the alterity of Black existence. The revolutionary humanist form of Fanonism might be considered as emerging from this Marxist-phenomenological tradition insofar as it shares the same kind of existentialist philosophy and dialectical humanism present within the scholarship of Gordon and Sekyi-Otu. The second camp, which Marriott engages through David Scott and Mbembe, builds on the Marxist-phenomenological tradition while offering a more pointed analysis of how one can move beyond an analysis of lived experience to consider the best ways to foment postcolonial resistance. Marriott challenges the revolutionary humanist perspective by returning us to Fanon's concept of *tabula rasa* which refers to a complete and utter suspension of all teleological narratives we have been ritually habituated into accepting as our destiny.[43] Building on afropessimist scholars such as Wilderson and Sexton, Marriott argues that we must also be careful not to convert Fanon's new humanism into another teleology. For Marriott, Fanon's search for a "new humanism" is not the search for a literal roadmap to an alternative humanity, but instead a search for something that exceeds the limits of imagination within an anti-Black world.[44] Thus, Marriott's critique raises questions about whether the revolutionary humanist perspective might represent yet another counter-icon worthy of veneration.

Marriott uses an emphasis on the psychoanalytic elements of Fanonian thought to bolster his criticism of a teleological narrative of revolutionary humanism. For him, all of Fanon's political writings are an extension of his clinical work and his wrestling with psychoanalysis more broadly. *Whither Fanon* is thus characterized by an in-depth analysis of Fanon's clinical practice and his relationship to Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to more fully explicate how Fanon's theorizing of the vertigo that characterizes the lived experience of Blackness as a kind of index of the Real.[45] In the Fanonian sense, the Symbolic might be understood as being a broad iconographic vocabulary grounded in a species division between Black skin and white masks, the Imaginary as representing how each subject attempts to wields this iconography as a means of gaining admittance into the culture of the white mask, and the Real as the fissures and anxieties that emerge in the Symbolic when it is revealed that one's white mask cannot cover over their Black skin. Ultimately, Marriott contends that Fanon's examination of Black vertigo reveals a larger concern with grasping how negrophobia "forms an index of affect, or semblance, that brings with it an anguish-laden atmosphere," and how that atmosphere is essential to the smooth operation of the white mask.[46] In this sense, despite the invaluable contributions these scholars offer to a study of Fanonian thought, Marriott's critique of this teleology might be applied to scholars like Rabaka, Gordon, Thomas, Olaloku-Teriba, and more who understand of Fanon as giving us a map to an alternative humanity. This desire for a systematic path toward an alternative humanity is an anti-Fanonian pursuit of a Bible of decolonization. Similar to Césaire, the iconoclastic spirit of revolutionary humanist Fanonism is subverted in favor of a new redemptive telos. Building on Marriott, I argue that there is a Black iconoclasm within Fanonian thought evidenced by this concept of *tabula rasa* that cannot be reduced to a variety of humanisms. Reading Fanon as engaging in Black iconoclasm disassembles the cyclical relationship between iconoclasm and icon creation that Taussig correctly highlights insofar as Fanon refuses to produce a formula for Black liberation. Instead, a Black iconoclastic interpretation of Fanon is broadly invested in a complete questioning and reversal of colonialism where "the last shall be first and the first last."[47]

A Black iconoclastic reading of Fanon via afropessimism begins from a demand for the end of the anti-Black world through a ritual shattering of its icons. To parse out what this

means, let us return to a passage from Fanon himself:

> La décolonisation, qui se propose de changer l'ordre du monde, est, on le voit, un programme de désordre absolu.[48]

This passage from Fanon's *Les Damnés de La Terre* concerning the process of decolonization is where the title of this essay originates, although the original French has been interpreted differently by the two popular English translations. In the version by Richard Philcox, the sentence is translated as "decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for total disorder."[49] In the version by Constance Farrington, the phrase is translated "decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder."[50] Whereas Philcox uses the phrase "agenda of total disorder" and Farrington uses the phrase "a program of complete disorder," the French phrase "*un programme de désordre absolu"* might also be understood as a reference to Georg Hegel's notion of "the Absolute" offering yet another perspective on how to interpret this passage. For Hegel, the Absolute represents the unconditional ground of a self-conscious and self-thinking infinite subject or Being. Operating as the sum of all human relation and potentiality, Hegel frames his discussion of dialectics in context of this self-referential and independent totality.

In considering the use of the term *absolu* in the original French version of *Les Damnés de La Terre*, one might consider how this *programme de désordre* relates to Fanon's larger adjustment of Hegel's approach to the lordship/bondage dialectic through the lens of a racialized colonialism.[51] As Adebayo Ogungbure explains, Hegel explicitly framed the Negro as exhibiting the wild and untamed natural man who had not come to develop "the knowledge of an absolute Being, an Other and a Higher than his individual self."[52] Fanon adjusts Hegel to more fully consider how the dialectical relationship between Black skin and white masks is absolutely grounded by the expulsion of Blackness into what Fanon calls a zone of non-being. The use of *absolu* hints at how Fanon's idea of decolonization is only attainable through an infinite process of negation that seeks to pull the rug (the Absolute) out from under the white mask until the entire affective atmosphere of negrophobia is fully shattered. While I personally prefer Farrington's "program of complete disorder," I am by no means trying to assert this translation as more accurate than Philcox's "agenda of total disorder." Instead, I want to hold these three different versions of the passage in tension as a way of disordering the range of meanings that are being derived from it. Regardless of the differences in exact phrasing, all three versions of this passage point to what I call a Black iconoclastic approach to the struggle for Black liberation. In fact, one might push back against the reading of the French "*qui se propose de changer"* into the English "sets out" which both Philcox and Farrington's translations share. Rather than "setting out," which assumes a clear destination or telos that one is pursuing through decolonization, reading this phrase differently as "decolonization, *which proposes to change* the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder," might instead uniquely reflect Fanon's desire to have a complex sitting with the question of decolonization in a broad ritual fashion rather than the establishment of a stringent and methodical "program" to be followed.

It is in this context that Wilderson argues that the afropessimist project takes up Fanon's call: through a refusal to affirm and a taking up of Blackness not as a positive value but as the point of absolute dereliction within the Real.[53] Wilderson refuses to offer a positive value to Blackness because he recognizes how that positive value would be taken up within the anti-Black Symbolic and Imaginary. For Wilderson, the demand of the Black

slave is "too iconoclastic" for our current imaginations, including even the most radical leftist theories.[54] Sexton concurs in his landmark piece "Ante-Anti-Blackness," "The most radical negation of the anti-black world is the most radical affirmation of a blackened world."[55] Following this, Fanon's declaration that what is required is an *absolu* destruction of the white mask is the embrace of a Black iconoclasm that refuses the icons of whiteness in favor of something that must be invented. In the introduction of *Black Skin White Masks* Fanon writes that his hope is to liberate Black people from the desire for whiteness, to liberate us from our own investment in attaining some sort of status in the white world.[56] He argues that he does not bring timeless truths to us, and that "in no fashion should [we] undertake to prepare the world that will come later. [We] belong irreducibly to [our] time."[57] In this sense, Fanon is attempting to dis-cohere the teleological narrative through which Black people perform rituals that get them closer and closer to whiteness. He explicitly refuses to offer new humanism as an iconic image of a salvation that we can conceptualize, but rather posits new humanism as the radically unwritten result of a ritual orientation toward the shattering of any telos that is prescribed as the cure for Black suffering.

Rather than charting out a path toward a new world initiated by an alternative humanity, a Black iconoclastic reading of Fanon interprets his call for a program of complete disorder as a call for the end of the world. As previously discussed, one might argue that stating the world must end is itself a telos thus confounding my argument. However, when Fanon speaks of telos, he doesn't mean that you cannot strive toward decolonization. He clearly states that the aims of his projects are to end the status quo through an antagonistic struggle. The critical distinction is this: just because one knows the world must end does not mean they must profess to have secret knowledge of the formula for the new world that would redeem us. Tapping into the Black iconoclasm within Fanonian thought, Wilderson explains that we must reject that second move toward a narrative of redemption; for him, Black people are categorically barred from narrative arcs in order stabilize this path toward redemption for the non-Black human.[58] It is in this context that afropessimist scholars argue that the only option is to produce a complete and utter suspension of these narrative arcs of redemption through a constant Fanonian proposal for the end of the world as we know it. As Marriott explains, this is also reflected in Fanon's clinical practice of *socialtherapie* which he argued could not offer a systematic path to making one's psyche whole again, but instead a process by which one could deduce and rupture the phantasms that lay at the heart of the individual's ego, the clinic, and the anti-Black society in which both the patient and analyst found themselves situated.[59] Thus, I argue that the afropessimist demand for the end of the world in conjunction with Fanon's argument that the process of decolonization is a complete program of disorder inaugurates a *tabula rasa*. Indeed, neither Black iconoclasm nor afropessimism are decontextualizing Fanonian thought; it is instead a meta-commentary that cautions readers of Fanon to consider how the solutions to Black abjection that they offer might also reproduce the teleological narratives that he rallied against.

Black Iconoclasm: The Ritual Practice of Negation as Invention

The crucial issue at stake in the debate between the revolutionary humanist and afropessimist interpretation of Fanon is about how to best unsettle the anti-Black cosmos

through a shattering of its icons. Each camp accuses the other of falling victim to this violent iconography; revolutionary humanists accuse the afropessimists of lifting up the categories of, and conceding humanity to, Western Man. Afropessimists accuse revolutionary humanists of producing a new counter-icon of an alternative humanity that will supposedly produce a new world free from anti-Blackness. This critique harkens back to Fanon's critique of Césaire's *Negritude* which seeks to imagine a mythical Black world that can rival Europe. This is why I frame revolutionary humanist Fanonism as an iconoclastic project that ultimately relinquishes the power of chaos and negativity in what is ultimately an anti-Fanonian pursuit of a redemptive telos. The afropessimist approach emphasizes Fanon's *tabula rasa* and program of complete disorder in their desire for the end of the world. This raises its own set of questions: namely, how does one pursue a Fanonian program of complete disorder or the afropessimist pursuit of the end of the world? Fanon's choice of words seems particularly contradictory; after all, how does one engage in a program if the hope is to completely disorder? How does one engage in rituals of chaos?

As I've explored, one of the major critiques of afropessimism made by revolutionary humanists is that it is more descriptive than prescriptive. Wilderson's perspective, which views afropessimism as a meta-theory that unsettles the redemption narratives established by humanist theories of liberation, has faced particular criticism for how it demands the end of the world without offering a method for doing so.[60] Other afropessimist scholars like Sexton have gotten close to discussing how this meta-theory results in a psycho-political imperative to embrace pathology and "to pay whatever social costs accrue to being black, to inhabiting blackness, to living a black social life under the shadow of social death" despite how counter-intuitive it may seem.[61] This gets us closer to thinking about the realm of everyday practice insofar as Sexton starts to carve out an understanding of negation as an everyday ritual practice of antagonism and refusal against the dictates of the anti-Black world. Moreover, Sexton importantly considers this practice of negation as being generative of Black social life and perhaps holding the key to Fanonian invention. Yet, questions still remain concerning how one engages in this active embrace of Black pathology.

Afropessimism, and by extension Black iconoclasm, finds itself in the weird position of believing that this anti-Black world can end via *absolu* antagonism while also refusing to entertain any strict method to engaging in such antagonism and any redemptive telos about what comes after this world ends. This is evident in the debates that have occurred between afropessimism, Warren's Black nihilism, and Moten's Black mysticism. Sexton critiques Warren's Black nihilism by arguing that the conclusion of *Ontological Terror* risks reducing the project of Black nihilism to enduring anti-Blackness as opposed to trying to end it. As Sexton notes, this contention that we can *only* endure identifies a distinction between Black nihilism and afropessimism.[62] It is not that endurance is wrong or bad, but it is to forget the fact that negation produces a space for invention. While I refuse to offer what we will invent, a Black iconoclastic reading of Fanon would also refuse a teleological narrative that forecloses the possibility of that invention. That is to say, the Black spirit does not simply resist as separate and outside of the socio-political field of anti-Blackness as a vehicle of endurance. Rather, a program of complete disorder is committed to an *absolu* undoing of the anti-Black colony.

If afropessimism cannot be reduced to endurance, then the question again becomes how *do* we engage in a project of ending the world? If, as Fanon argues, decolonization is a program of complete disorder, Moten argues this "leads, without much turning, to the

question of what a *program* of complete disorder would be. In any case it is difficult to see how . . . the negation that is always already negated would carry out such a program."[63] In this reading, Fanon via afropessimism privileges the dictates of the anti-Black world and is "brutally cut off" in regard to paying attention to the "irreducible presence" of Black sociality.[64] While Moten similarly rejects revolutionary humanism, he is trying to assert that there is a way to embrace Black sociality that both rejects afropessimism's refusal to affirm and the counter-icon of revolutionary humanism. In considering the risk of producing a counter-icon through his embracement of Black sociality, Moten uses the metaphor of a "subprime debtor" who takes a huge, seemingly irrational, risk on something they will probably never be able to repay the debt on.[65] In this metaphor, Black sociality is a radical undercommons that he is betting on even if it risks bearing the brunt of the critique that Fanon via afropessimism has launched of producing systematic blueprints of Black revolution in their emphasis on *tabula rasa.* For Moten, this is the Black radical tradition of "making a way out of no way (out)" whether it seems "stupid" to others or not.[66] However, Moten's Black mysticism has garnered responses from afropessimists like Sexton and Marriott.

Afropessimism responds to Moten's criticism by arguing that there is no disavowal of Black sociality anywhere in their meta-theory or the scholarship of Fanon. It is not that afropessimism doesn't care about Black sociality; rather, there is a deep recognition that any attempt to map out what that Black sociality is will inevitably fail because our current imagination remains too constrained by the iconography of the anti-Black cosmos. As Sexton explains,

> Afro-pessimism-in-practice, or a practical or practiced afro-pessimism, may seem a contradiction in terms; afro-pessimism, it seems, is necessary to think with and impossible to do. You can only do something about it. It doesn't matter really, since the praxis, the theory-informed practice, is happening anyway, all around us, all about us. We just don't know anything about it, and *as soon as we make the attempt to produce such knowledge, it slips our grasp*, despite our best intentions .[67]

Whereas Moten locates a positive mapping of Black sociality as being generative for invention, afropessimism responds that such mapping results in the stifling of Fanonian invention in favor of replicating already existing methods of Black fugitivity. In that sense, the afropessimist is not the regulator of the subprime debtor; instead, it seems that it is Moten who is unsatisfied with the call for a program of complete disorder precisely because it relies on making a way out of a chaotic *no way*. More to the point, Moten disavows the generative capacity of negation in his search of a positive conception of Black sociality viewing it instead as stopping at a totalizing description of Blackness. He declares that "the hold [of the slave ship] is no *via negativa"* but instead a "distressed circuitry" without ever considering how it is negation and chaos that shocks the anti-Black cosmos and initiates this inventive circuitry.[68] In offering the Black fugitive, the mystic refuses to sit with their lack of knowledge about whatever new Black sociality might form in a world beyond anti-Blackness. Rather than embracing this mystical approach to the search for a Bible of decolonization, the Black iconoclast chooses to dwell within the *no way* of disorder.

Black iconoclasm takes up afropessimism as a meta-commentary to think through a ritual process that habitually intervenes in that critical juncture between the making and breaking of icons within an anti-Black cosmos. Black iconoclasm cannot be seen as a singular event in which we diagnose the unethicality of the anti-Black world, shatter some

icons, and subsequently move on to the work of building a new Black world. Instead, it means committing oneself to a persistent tracking of this cyclical relationship to consider how one shatters the dialectic itself not as synthesis but as an *absolu* dismantling of the very terms grounding the antagonism between white and Black. It means considering how even some of those most radical visions of a new Black world threatens that project of dismantling. Black feminist thinker Sharpe's concept of wake work is important for thinking about afropessimism-in-practice. Rather than offering us a redemptive telos, wake work is a process of undisciplining that begins with thinking and acting from the hold of the slave ship and meditating on the "total climate of anti-Blackness."[69] Particularly important is that wake work does not require that we engage in one particular ritual over and over again; instead, it is a broad program that is rooted in the negation of the slave ship. Wake work might look like mourning, tracking the movements of the slave ship, or even waking up in the sense of activating one's consciousness.[70] It is all of these things and yet not reducible to any one of them. Perhaps the most important aspect of Sharpe's concept of wake work as it relates to Fanonian invention is that the metaphor of the hold freely acknowledges that we don't yet know where the ship is taking us. Similarly, Black iconoclasm is rooted in the humble understanding that we cannot fully grasp the pervasiveness of this anti-Black cosmos nor what possibilities might lie beyond it. From our position only one thing is clear, there can be no salvation in an anti-Black world.

Black iconoclasm requires that we move beyond description and diagnosis but that we also refuse teleological prescription; instead, it means dedicating oneself to an *absolu* process of negation and chaos, remaining within this radical suspension of telos, never satisfied with your pursuit of *tabula rasa*. Black iconoclasm should be thought of as an imperfect and contextual ritual mode of chaos that places the afropessimist demand for the end of the world in the realm of everyday practice through the antagonizing of icons within the anti-Black cosmos and the refusal of all teleological redemption narratives. This ritual orientation toward chaos, just as wake work, might look different according to the rhetorical situation but still offers a broad program of complete disorder where invention might exist. Whereas one might read Wilderson's imperative for an "unflinching paradigmatic analysis" as a call for rigid perfection, Black iconoclasm reads this statement in precisely the opposite register.[71] Instead, it is a reminder that this is an endless pursuit, riddled with failures, and requires a humble approach to both Fanon's corpus and the struggle for Black liberation writ large. The ritual commitment to Black iconoclasm calls into question the emergence of narratives concerning Black liberation and a progressive future, whatever the source, by linking them to a larger cosmology of anti-Black violence. As Marriott explains, Fanon was extremely skeptical of the "ruse of a black world." Marriott continues, "if one believes that this world only exists as possibility (a thought forever enclosed by anti-blackness), then *any claim to know it must be fraudulent* ."[72] In this sense, there is no way to create a replicable model of Black iconoclasm, because it requires attention to the specific and contingent manifestations of emerging icons in an anti-Black cosmos. It is an unflinching reminder that at the exact moment you have fallen in love with a map to a Black world you have found yourself worshipping a new icon in need of disordering. In the spirit of Fanon, we must take a leap toward the unknown, fully embrace the fall, think from that chaotic no-place or what Fanon calls "*n'est pas*," and traverse the erratic yet inventive trajectories that iconoclasm generates.[73]

Chaotic Conclusion(s)

Over the course of this essay, I have examined popular forms of Fanonism that both demonstrate Fanon's importance to the field of Black and cultural studies but also highlight an ongoing dispute amongst scholars about who has the proper interpretation of his corpus. Whether one is in favor of antiracist, decolonialist, critical, Marxist, feminist, revolutionary humanist, or afropessimist Fanonism there is a common investment in iconoclastically smashing the anti-Black cosmos. What remains contested is the best approach to harnessing the potential of what Fanon calls new humanism. This essay shows that far from simply smashing the icon of the white mask, Fanon similarly cautioned scholars against the creation of new alternative icons of redemption that calcify their own teleological narrative. For Fanon, it is not the particular icon that is the problem, but the form of iconography that underlies, and has thus constrained, our political imagination. Drawing on afropessimist thought, this essay challenges the revolutionary humanist perspective as risking the creation of a new icon of an alternative revolutionary humanism that stifles true Fanonian invention. It is for this reason that Fanon launches a blistering criticism of his close friend and contemporary Aimé Césaire's celebration of cultural nationalism and vanguardism, decrying it as a nauseating mimicry of European values.

Turning to an examination of the afropessimist turn in Fanonist study, I analyze intramural debates between Wilderson, Sexton, Warren, and Moten as it relates to the Fanonian concept of invention. Whereas Warren argues negation aids endurance in an anti-Black world, and Moten argues Fanon via afropessimism's focus on negation brutally cuts off a focus on the inventiveness of Black fugitive sociality, I explicate the Black iconoclasm that resides within Fanon via afropessimism's approach to the process of decolonization as an *absolu* and perhaps infinite ritual process of negation that seeks to completely dismantle the anti-Black cosmos and take a leap toward something new and unimaginable. It is this ritual orientation toward chaos that initiates Fanon's *tabula rasa*, a space cleared of *a priori* values and ripe for invention. How does one engage in Black iconoclasm? How do we reconcile the tension between the concepts of ritual and chaos? How does one work toward the end of the world without reproducing new icons? I do not have neat answers. We must recognize the ineffability of Black liberation and the need to operate within that suspension of telos. Yet, this recognition need not result in a neoliberal celebration of cultural hybridity that Gates's critical Fanonism has been accused of. Indeed, Black iconoclasm is driven by the pursuit of decolonization and afropessimist theory that Gates would probably deem too grand and universal for his liking. Instead, this essay attempts to place afropessimist concepts such as ending the world, embracing pathology, into the realm of practice.

Black iconoclasm is a constant reminder that every single time you believe yourself to have found the systematic path to Black liberation it is probably time to reflect on your potential creation of a redemptive telos. To engage in Black iconoclasm means to dedicate oneself to an *absolu* process of negation and chaos, remaining within this radical suspension of telos, never satisfied with your pursuit of *tabula rasa*. Following cultural theorist Louis M. Maraj, we might think of this ritual commitment toward ending the world as a process of anti-humanist "Black rhetorical reclamation" which, far from attempting to gain recognition from white institutions, "culls Black histories, temporalities, languages, and literacies as Black invention."[74] Just as Fanon, I do not offer timeless truths and so I fully recognize and embrace the potential failures of my own theorizations. I believe that this kind of humble approach to Black liberation is absolutely necessary. In that spirit, I invite the reader to disorder my own potential pursuit of a redemptive telos just as I have sought to unsettle other forms of Fanonism. I invite you to invent *via negativa*.

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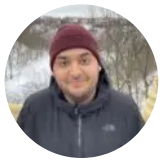
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Airing Grievances: Academic Hoaxing and the Performance of Boundary Work

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ABSTRACT Through an examination of the 2018 "grievance studies" hoax this essay considers the role hoaxing plays in the articulation of both internal and external modes of institutional critique that pertain to the production, verification, and dissemination of knowledge. By examining the grievances of three academics who wrote over twenty false/fraudulent articles—seven of which were published in (and later retracted from) peer-reviewed journals—this research attends to the different kinds of boundary work and repair that are performed and enacted by academics to shed light on the conflicting ways knowledge production and academic labour are currently contextualized and understood.

KEYWORDS academia, boundary work, discourse, grievance studies, hoaxing, peer review, publishing

Introduction

The use of deception has proven to be a defining feature of contemporary life, particularly within the realm of news and information online.[1] The widespread circulation of misleading, fabricated, erroneous, and fraudulent stories and information via networked digital media platforms continues to influence popular discussion and debate surrounding the current state of public discourse.[2] One branch of these deceptive practices—the hoax—warrants specific attention. As acts of mischievous or humorous deception, hoaxes of all kinds have materialized online through the careful selection of targets and the clever subversion of perceived truths or reality.[3] The prevalence of hoaxing has left many journalists and news media vulnerable to attack, with the latter falling prey periodically to deceptions of various stripes. In the instances when news media have been intentionally fooled by media hoaxers, the former systematically engage in the performance of paradigm repair[4] and boundary work[5], that is, in the shoring up of their own credibility, trustworthiness, and importance. Any real or perceived harm created by a given hoax is minimized, with the reputation of the journalist, news organization, and profession cast as remaining securely intact.

Of late, hoaxing has also taken wing in academia, creating momentary ruptures in the fabric of academic life and culture.[6] When academic hoaxes do materialize, academics respond in kind with their own forms of paradigm repair and boundary work. Because hoaxes in academia tend to generate broad news media coverage, they offer a unique point of departure for exploring the features and bugs of boundary work and repair among academics. Through an examination of the 2018 “grievance studies” hoax, this essay considers the role hoaxing plays in the articulation of both internal and external modes of institutional critique that pertain to the production, verification, and dissemination of knowledge. By examining the grievances of three academics who wrote over twenty fraudulent articles—seven of which were accepted for publication in (and later retracted from) peer reviewed journals—this research attends to the different kinds of boundary work and repair that are performed and enacted by academics to shed light on the conflicting ways knowledge production and academic labor are currently contextualized and understood. The hoax represents an elaborate and sophisticated deception aimed to discredit the scholarly publishing activities of

humanities and social sciences researchers. As Reilly (2020) notes, "the group devised and followed a loose set of criteria, with each hoax article having to engage at least one or more of the following: a humorous tone, ludicrous or outrageous theses, lack of rigor, amateurish construction, and little understanding of the field."[7] Articles on dog park canine rape culture, "breastaurants," fat bodybuilding, and a "feminist rewrite of a chapter from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*," among others, were submitted to targeted journals in cultural studies, critical theory, and gender studies—so-called "grievance studies" scholarship "based less upon finding truth and more upon attending to social grievances."[8] This hoax incited a wide array of responses from academics across the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences, among other faculties and disciplines. Of specific interest and concern to scholars who published public commentary on the hoax were issues surrounding the corruption of scholarship, critique of the peer review system, and the anomalous nature of the hoax. What emerged through the performance of boundary work was a more comprehensive defense of the institution of peer review and a more nuanced debate regarding academic norms and rigors.

Situating Academic Hoaxing

To better contextualize the contours of this complex hoax, this study begins with an overview of academic hoaxing and boundary work, before turning to a broader examination of the "grievance studies" hoax. The term *hoaxing* can conjure up all kinds of associations and proclivities. For Kingwell, hoaxing is likened to the following: "A gag, a goof, a blindfold; a spoof, a jape, a deceit; deliberate equivocation; fakery, impersonation, infiltration. Pretending what is not the case. The triumph of appearance over reality."[9] Given its protean malleability as a cultural form and practice, hoaxing continues to draw much appreciation and derision for its ability to drum up notoriety, spectacle, and scandal. If hoaxing refers at once to "humorous or mischievous deception" (*Oxford English Dictionary*) and to "an act intended to trick or dupe; something accepted or established by fraud or fabrication" (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*), we can begin to appraise core features and dynamics, such as intentional trickery, deception, and fabrication. Hoaxing is rarely a benign activity, with many of its practitioners seeking to shore up notoriety and fame.[10] Adding to the stakes of such activities, hoaxing involves the careful engineering of a "public form of deception."[11] Part of the attraction to, and repudiation of, hoaxing is tied to the form's guile and artfulness: "Not bound by the facts, the hoax is free to fabricate feelings and the genres associated with them."[12] In passing the fake as authentic,[13] and in presenting staged events capable of shaping public discussion surrounding what counts as truth,[14] it is no wonder that hoaxers emerge as especially divisive figures.

Hoaxes thus function to split audiences or readerships into two groups: "those who catch on quickly and thereafter read in consonance with the hoaxer as co-conspirators and those who are duped and are later embarrassed by the revelation of the hoax."[15] The potential for a kind of coercion and complicity between hoaxer and audience is most palpable when the hoax is successful in garnering broader attention.[16] The degree to which this complicity remains intact hinges largely on whether the target is perceived to have warranted the attention, and whether the hoax has materialized as an object of instruction or entertainment.[17] Hoaxes can produce even deeper divisions when humorous forms of deception are cast as "inherently mean-spirited and unethical."[18] In matters of heated debate, things can devolve sharply: when hoaxes are orchestrated to show the superiority of one idea over another, the outcome "is only a deepening of polarized views, a hardening of differences, ideological fragmentation, and heated argument."[19]

Because hoaxing most often entails the public shaming or embarrassment of a figure or group through the "comic unmasking of the gullibility of others," hoaxes

do not register as "particularly kind or gentle rhetorical events."[20] Indeed, deceptions of this kind are perceived to be even less welcome and more stinging when the targets involved are experts or professionals in a given field. As many scholars have shown, hoaxes serve as dramatizations of broader contestations over the status of truth through acts that seek to raise questions about the processes and standards by which claims and knowledge are attributed legitimacy.[21] Add to this the notion that hoaxes tend to "flourish in contest cultures" and one can readily appreciate how academia has proven fertile ground for hoaxing.[22] In the realm of higher education, hoaxing can work to reveal not only *who* but also *what* counts as legitimate, teaching us more about "power relations that permeate different professions than about the discourses they target."[23]

For the purposes of this study, I will limit the discussion to hoaxing in academic publishing. One proven strategy embedded in the practice of academic hoaxing is to blindside one's target by catering to the latter's assumptions, near-sightedness, and/or self-importance.[24] To perform admirably in this regard, hoaxers "rely on trust and perform deliberate acts of betrayal."[25] Above and beyond this, success hinges on a number of variables, but one must certainly bypass the following two phases: first, the entrapment period (when an article is submitted to and later published by the targeted journal); second, the reveal phase (when the article is revealed to be fake and a follow-up piece explains the hoaxer's motives and justifications).[26] While the entrapment approach is designed to offer the hoaxer some latitude in explaining the careful reasoning behind the deception, the hoax's public reception is always subject to interpretation and contestation. As Secor and Walsh remind us, the hoaxer cannot control the hoax's broader reception.[27] How the hoaxer and target fare in the public discussion that ensues is very much contingent upon the degree of credibility each figure holds.[28] To better assess the nature of the disruptions created via academic hoaxing, this study situates these instances of deception as "critical incidents" that invite the performance of boundary work and repair across news media and higher education publications.

Boundary Work/Repair: Interpretive Communities and Critical Incidents

This essay explores how academics respond publicly to academic hoaxing, particularly in instances when hoaxes have stirred up controversy and debate. To better apprehend the broader meaning and significance of these discursive flashpoints, I apply theories of boundary work to academic hoaxing (as defined in science and journalism studies). Scholarly discussion of boundary work first appears in Gieryn, who situated the concept as central to understanding how epistemic authority in the sciences is not only created but also reinforced. In rejecting the notion that epistemic authority is anything but predetermined or natural, Gieryn advanced the idea that the larger authority upon which science rests is the outcome of ongoing boundary work on the part of professional scientists regularly engaged in "credibility contests."[29] One such expression of boundary work in the realm of science is the demarcation of real science from pseudo- or non-science. Simply put, these demarcations are the result of the "discursive act of defining what science is and what science can do."[30] As Gieryn argued, the "mediating representations of what science is or what scientists do" are just as important in describing the profession's power, prestige, and influence as is the science emerging from labs and journals.[31]

At its most basic level, this conceptual framework demands a critical inquiry into the factors that make possible the seal of legitimacy for actors, practices, texts, and institutional structures in certain fields. In the field of journalism, for example, debates surrounding "what journalism is and what it should be" are ongoing.[32] In journalism, boundaries are established over time through the discursive setting of

parameters for what is deemed appropriate or acceptable, all of which are subject to ongoing contestation and negotiation.[33] Elsewhere, Duffy and Knight liken *boundaries* to Bourdieu's *fields,* where "various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field";[34] their research suggests that boundary work functions as a vehicle for patrolling, regulating, and maintaining professional identity, not as a path towards greater innovation and experimentation.[35] Boundary work is expressed via metajournalistic discourse (any discourse about journalism) to "reflect embedded assumptions about what journalism is (and what it is not), how it ought to be practiced (and how it ought not), and who belongs within its boundaries (and who does not)."[36] Hence, the boundaries of journalism are socially constructed through the discourse produced by a broad and disparate interpretive community of journalists.[37] The "interpretive community" is built in the interests of shoring up community norms and practices; at their core, "interpretive communities function to build bonds internally while advocating definitional control externally."[38]

Boundary maintenance is used across professions to gain and/or establish cultural authority through symbolic contests that serve to marginalize non-professionals.[39] In establishing the parameters needed to ensure proper oversight of its widely shared norms and practices (e.g., distinguishing between professionals and non-professionals), the community is in a position to identify and respond to deviant incidents or activities. "Critical incidents" refer to events that lead journalists to reflect on the "hows and whys of journalistic practice."[40] Case studies include Princess Diana's death, the rise of WikiLeaks, the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal, and the recent debates concerning fake news, among many others. Carlson and Berkowitz explain that these incidents can function as examples of "synecdochic deviance," that is, as evidence of deviance that is perceived to be widespread, not isolated.[41] Expulsion-based boundary work responds to these anomalies by removing actors, practices, or values that fall outside the legitimate journalistic establishment (e.g., "hall of shame" journalists Janet Cooke, Jayson Blair, and Stephen Glass).[42] During these moments, journalists actively reflect on incidents of journalistic deviance to identify what went wrong and how best to re-establish professional norms.[43] These events function as discursive opportunities for journalists to publicly address failures and shortcomings and "to ensure the well-being of their interpretive community by reconsidering, rearticulating, and reinforcing their boundaries and authority."[44] Ultimately, boundary maintenance is enacted to justify longstanding norms and to stave off threats from outsiders.[45]

Finally, as Fakazis' work on "critical events" reveals, these instances also add much needed visibility to competing discourses among journalists as they attempt to redefine what counts as legitimate and acceptable practice within the profession.[46] Building on Fakazis, this study sheds light on the mediating representations of academia as they are produced "downstream" via news sites and academic journals during the critical incident of this study: the "grievance studies" hoax.[47] The debates foregrounded during this period affirm that academia is "not a unified, static entity with fixed borders" but rather a site of ongoing discursive and epistemological contestation.[48] As we will see, some instances of boundary breaching and their subsequent repair are not always clear-cut.[49] What is clear is how academic hoaxing can function as a critical incident that activates boundary work and repair within an interpretive community producing contested appraisals regarding academic knowledge and labor. Due to the wide variety of academics drawn to the public discussion propelled by the hoax (some closer, some further removed from the controversy), this "interpretive community" would ultimately cohere around perceived norms and accepted codes of conduct. Boundary work would thus retain a critical function in enabling academics to publicly identify fault lines and to shore up professional credibility and institutional authority.

Methodology

This study examines the public discourse generated by academics in response to the "grievance studies" hoax. News articles and academic journal editorials from a six-month sample period beginning on October 1, 2018 are analyzed. The sample period attests not only to the hoax's importance as a critical incident around which academics were called upon to discuss specific facets of higher education, it also sheds light on the controversy's capacity to stimulate broader consensus and dissensus. Drawing on Carlson and Berkowitz, the sample is limited to commentaries, opinion columns, editorials, and analyses of news stories by academics that focus on the meaning of the hoax for academia.[50] Discourse analysis, close reading, and thematic analyses of thirty-five texts are used to crystallize and distill the discursive efforts of a disparate group. Given this study's emphasis on the performance of boundary work in relation to journalism studies scholarship, academics' public responses to the hoax are cast as the activities of an "interpretive community," much in the manner journalists engage in metajournalistic discourse. Just as journalists form a vast and diverse group of voices, so too do academics emerge as a cacophonous body of actors. One visible by-product of the metadiscursive activities of such an amorphous group is that while consensus is never achieved, certain actors are given greater leeway to shape or reorient the nature of the discussion. The other defining feature of these discursive activities is that they do not exist in isolation of or apart from competing discussions and debates, but rather in tandem with and in proximity to contestations over what these events mean. The overlapping discourses produced by academics are thus examined as belonging to a small but porous news media ecology. For the purposes of this essay, discussion surrounding the performance of boundary work will be limited to an exploration of academics' published accounts of and public responses to the hoax.

Contextualizing Grievances: Academic Responses to the Hoax

It is difficult to disentangle the first two accounts of this hoax, as they would both ostensibly shape the coverage to follow: the hoaxer's own reveal essay in digital magazine *Areo*, and the *Wall Street Journal* story that outed them. Having first been discovered but not immediately outed by *Wall Street Journal* reporter Jillian Kay Melchior for a paper on canine "rape culture," the group was given just enough leeway to prepare its own media-savvy defense: stock photos, press release, comprehensive essay, and exposé-style documentary.[51] In their reveal essay, "Academic Grievance Studies and the Corruption of Scholarship," Helen Pluckrose ("exile from the humanities"), James Lindsay ("doctorate in math"), and Peter Boghossian ("non-tenure track professor of philosophy") announced having coauthored and submitted twenty fake articles to peer reviewed journals. The larger argument presented by the group was twofold: that the "grievance studies" peer review system will allow just about anything to pass as knowledge, and that academics in these fields "increasingly bully students, administrators, and other departments into adhering to their worldview."

The following day saw the publication of Melchior's "Fake News Comes to Academia" in the *Wall Street Journal*.[52] Both respective reveal articles would deliver the prototype for virtually all of the news coverage to follow: the hoaxers' own story arc of three "left-leaning" liberal academics who wrote twenty hoax papers that were submitted to peer reviewed journals (seven of which were accepted for publication); in addition, the project was linked to NYU physics professor Alan Sokal's infamous *Social Text* hoax as part of a perceived historical lineage.[53] Melchior approached the story from both divides of the hoax, giving ample room for the hoaxers to vindicate their deception, and offering targeted journal editors an opportunity to denounce the group's violation of "many ethical and academic norms." The article concludes with a rumination on the uncertain futures of the hoaxers who may experience hardship in the wake of their project: Boghossian may be fired or punished by his university, Pluckrose may have a

difficult time being admitted to a doctoral program, and Lindsay risks becoming "an academic pariah," barred from publishing or employment.

Over the next few weeks, the hoax would attract roughly forty news articles from journalists and commentators and over twenty-five responses from academics. For journalists, some care was given to describe the hoax in a fair and balanced register, with the general outline of a story beginning with the exposé of the hoax and hoaxers (including their story, motives, rationale), seguing into a discussion of critiques/criticisms of the project, and ending with some reflection on the state of higher education or academic conduct. The vast majority of the articles surveyed included materials provided by the hoaxers by way of their press kit. Given the sophistication with which the hoaxers were able to present the hoax to their audience, stories often reproduced the language, themes, and arguments set forth by the hoaxers. The latter's own pronouncements so convincingly swayed the vast majority of observers that even the real numbers attached to their efforts have been poorly publicized. As al-Gharbi stated, "the trio made 48 attempts (in 29 journals)."[54] So lackluster was the media coverage in this regard that the hoaxers were routinely taken at their word, with only a few commentators challenging the hoaxers' claims to success.[55] As Christensen and Sears observed of the slanted nature of news reportage, "It is bitterly disappointing that publications that focus on higher education are either so easily hoodwinked or eagerly in on the fix."[56]The discourse generated by the hoax in both academic and popular press literature suggests that many engaged in battles over the meaning of the hoax. Even a cursory survey of articles firmly establishes a broader desire to encapsulate what the hoax means, shows, reveals, overlooks, or as one author put it, what the hoax is really about.[57]

The Many Layers of Academic Responses: Corrupt Scholarship, Peer Review Under Review, Anomalous Activities

Just as hoaxes can flourish in contest cultures and can also add greater visibility to credibility contests, this project would enliven ongoing debates surrounding the reputation, credibility, authority, and ultimately, legitimacy of certain precincts of higher education. On the heels of the hoax's revelation in mainstream media, academics from across disciplines (and from a variety of epistemological, ethical, political, and professional standpoints) emerged as an interpretive community that produced competing views surrounding the acceptability as well as the implications of such actions. Scholars were offered space to comment in the *The Chronicle of Higher Education (Chronicle), Times Higher Ed, Inside Higher Education, Washington Post, New York Times, Boston Globe, The Atlantic, Quillette,* and *Heterodox Academy,* among other publishing outlets. The hoax's significance did not go unnoticed: both *Quillette* and the *Chronicle* published a salon-style set of essays to offer opposing views on the controversy. Among the most important actors engaged in the performance of boundary work, journal editors also created space for discussion and reflection in the pages of various peer reviewed publications: certain targeted journals issued statements of retraction in their pages, and a total of nine substantive editorials about the hoax were published in academic journals.[58] In what follows, I examine the performance of boundary work on the part of academics through three dominant and overlapping themes: the corruption of scholarship, the culture of peer review, and the anomalous nature of the hoax.

The Problem of Corrupt Scholarship

From the outset, the hoaxers argued that their project was designed to expose "corruptions of research," "corrupted research journals," and "corrupt scholarship."[59] The main premise for supporting their overriding thesis—that "grievance studies" scholarship is corrupt—is that so long as scholars are willing to "appropriate the existing literature in the right ways," they can get "absurdities and morally fashionable political ideas published as legitimate academic research."[60] The second charge of corruption is leveled against critical and radical constructivism (or postmodernism), scholarship that they deem is antithetical to science, ethics, and universal liberalism. The academics most supportive of this line of argumentation produced commentaries for *Quillette*, in a special forum curiously published prior to the articles that announced the hoax. Consistent with the magazine's editorial slant, each of the five authors (academics from philosophy, English, and behavioral genetics) cast the real problem as the modern university's embrace of postmodernity and its rejection of reason and empiricism.[61] As Arden (2018) succinctly put it, "reason has been exchanged for ideology."[62] Postmodernists, the perceived targets of the hoax, were taken to task for having "no expertise and no profound understanding."[63] In the most polemical of the five responses, Anomaly argued that the hoax had exposed cultish ideas, fake subjects, and bogus scholarship—all of which are subsidized by taxpayer funding.[64] Overall, *Quillette*'s academic salon produced a consensus of sorts on the merits of the hoax, on the critique of its targets, and in the call for greater accountability on the part of the dominant academic Left in Western universities.[65]

Echoing this chorus of enthusiastic supporters, Ferguson exclaimed in the *Boston Globe* that "they had pulled off one of the greatest hoaxes in the history of academia."[66] The conservative academic establishment comprised of the likes of Steven Pinker, Richard Dawkins, Jordan Peterson, and Alan Sokal celebrated the hoax as further confirmation of the sorry state of "postmodern" academic scholarship. Elsewhere, scholars supportive of the hoax such as Mounk expressed concern for how the targeted journals "failed to distinguish between real scholarship and intellectually vacuous as well as morally troubling bullshit."[67] Pushing the corruption thesis forward in *Psychology Today,* Jussim observed that journals lacking rigorous oversight had succeeded in publishing "extreme, bizarre, and some would argue deeply intolerant and dangerous papers."[68] Heying opined that the hoax is proof that universities have been steered away from being places of scholarship and inquiry to venues for activism and politicization.[69]

Those supportive of the hoax argued that scholarship must be empirical, rigorous, credible, and non-ideological; they also suggested that the hoax offers evidence that breaches in the integrity of these journals and fields are widespread, and proof that these publishing venues are intellectually-compromised. The broader claim being advanced is that postmodern, ideological, and activist scholarship has achieved mainstream status within and beyond the university, and as a result, the corrupt research being produced is seeping into mainstream popular discourse and producing irreparable harm. Ferguson likened the culture to a closed society in which researchers produce "rubbish" that they then teach, the fruits of which are graduates with rubbish degrees who then live and work among the rest of us.[70] The larger stakes of these public debates are expressed by Anomaly: "Trendy disciplines with names that end with the word 'studies,'" he asserted, should be defunded, a sentiment echoed by the hoaxers.[71] *Quillette*'s salon thus figured as the first of many expressions of boundary work regarding the hoax: critiques of postmodernist scholarship, ideological blind spots in research, and the failures of peer review to detect intellectually troubling and dangerous ideas represented key elements associated with the broader charge of corrupt scholarship in "grievance studies" fields.

Critics of the hoax would also take up the issue of corrupt scholarship, albeit from a different set of perspectives. One week after revelation of the hoax, the *Chronicle* would follow suit with a forum of its own, adding the perspectives of seven academics to the mix. The notable diversity of this group (scholars of political science, biology, history, sociology, and gender studies) certainly

increased the range of responses. The hoaxers' arguments were largely discredited by many commentators who described the project as being ethically indefensible and as a dangerous exercise in the perversion of the peer review process. If *Quillette* commentators had been quick to denounce postmodernism and its pseudo-scholarship, certain *Chronicle* authors chose to contextualize the hoax, first, as academic misconduct and, second, as a coordinated effort to devalue and defund the humanities.[72]

For these commentators, the corruption of scholarship theme would pivot around the overlapping issues of academic dishonesty, research misconduct, and fraud. Bergstrom described the group's activities as "straight-up academic misconduct"; Petrzela conceived of the project as "outlandish arguments founded on fake data"; and in addition to the charge of data falsification, Spruce, Ojeda, and Breslow added the misrepresentation of author identities (credentials and affiliations) and the presentation of bad-faith submissions as problematic breaches.[73] A group of anonymous scholars at Portland State University (colleagues of Boghossian) published a harsh indictment of the group's activities, citing the work as "junk pieces" seeking to obfuscate, and as falsified research best referred to as fraud.[74] Such interpretations were unsurprising because Pluckrose, Lindsay, and Boghossian invited its audience to consider the hoax as research—after all, they presented the project as "reflexive ethnography." In doing so, the group was criticized for engaging in ethnographic research without research ethics approval.[75] Aside from engaging in a dubious form of ethnographic research, the group's methodology was duly criticized for lacking a control group for the experiment.[76] That the group received funding from anonymous "benefactors" to work on the project for one year would also invite additional criticism regarding the lack of ethics.[77] As al-Gharbi pointed out, research funding is typically disclosed upon submission and publication for several reasons, including the elimination of conflicts-of-interest.[78] Yet another way of flagging the work as corrupt was to clarify that the hoaxers were not experts or even scholars of the work they were critiquing, rendering criticisms about these disciplines as occupying shaky ground.[79]

Evidence of corrupt and/or unethical conduct was also tied to the group's perceived motives and motivations. al-Gharbi insisted that there are ways to critique a field via hoaxing or deception without engaging in unethical conduct: the group could have opted to withdraw the articles prior to publication and to alert the editors—they merely chose not to.[80] The reality, Phipps argued in *Times Higher Education,* is that "despite their claim to be engaging in 'good-faith' critique, it's clear that Pluckrose, Lindsay and Boghossian actually aim to undermine fields they have political—not scholarly—objections to."[81] Elsewhere, Denzin and Giardina documented the "fundamental dishonesty at play": the hoaxers had gone to great lengths to falsely show that researchers in qualitative fields willfully ignore the evidence/findings of their own studies to make arguments that align with their ideological positions.[82] Indeed, Denzin and Giardina were careful to remind both the hoaxers and the qualitative researchers they were addressing that "that is not how critical scholarship works!"

Editorial responses attempted to connect academic hoaxing with research misconduct and fraud. For example, Grech, in an article in *Early Human Development*, positioned the hoax/ers in tandem with other notable scandals in academic publishing, namely, the Sokal Affair, a Korean cloning scandal, and the Andrew Wakefield autism vaccine controversy. Grech openly discouraged researchers from engaging in hoaxes of any kind, as they can entail serious repercussions and unintended consequences. Invoking these fraudulent activities, Grech argued that "academics have an ethical responsibility to ensure the highest uncompromising standards of research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting."[83] Anything short of this would constitute harm to science as a whole, resulting in diminished public trust in institutions. The boundary work performed in the *Chronicle* and in subsequent editorial responses serves as a counterpoint to the *Quillette* forum, the former positioning the corruption of scholarship as akin to the manifestation of unwelcome corrupt

behaviors, practices, protocols, and politics—at once false, dishonest, unethical, and harmful. The boundary work expressed to validate or marginalize certain forms of scholarly publishing activities would also appear alongside discussions regarding acceptable and unethical behavior in the realm of peer review, to which we now turn.

"Fix This Problem": Peer Review Under Review

The second major "boundary work" theme to emerge in relation to the hoax concerns peer review. Because the fundamental premise of the hoax was to expose the corruption across disciplines through the publishing activities of academic journals, peer review became a central point of discussion and deliberation. Overall, the failures of peer review emerged as primary points of concern—with the majority expressing a desire to see greater care and handling in these matters. Defenders of the hoax saw merit in the use of deception as a means of exposing the laziness, bias, and self-importance of the targeted journals and disciplines. The hoax was evidence of the growing proliferation of "drivel" too keenly "praised to the skies by academic peer reviewers"[84] and of the growing proliferation of "pseudo-philosophy."[85] Another notable aspect of the responses was the characterization of the hoax as being effective, but only to a point. These hoax articles may have been accepted in the journals of marginalized subfields in the humanities, but they would have never "penetrated the leading journals of more traditional disciplines."[86] Drezner's *Washington Post* critique of the project's weaknesses reaffirmed that hoaxes of this quality would never make it through peer review in sociology, economics, or chemistry. For academics sympathetic to this line of argumentation, journals having fallen victim to the deception were cast as some combination of negligent, complicit, or too easily amenable. Arden stated the case as such: "It looks like a case of reviewers asleep at the wheel."[87]

If peer review remained a topic of concern for academics, it certainly found expression in several statements regarding the vulnerabilities of the system. In a *Cultural Studies* editorial, Striphas pinpointed the inherent weaknesses of the scholarly publishing ecosystem: namely, that the mass profusion of journals and series had produced far more opportunities for work that might once have been excluded from academic publishing to be published.[88] In Lichtenstein's view, the hoax was more an indictment of the growing hegemony of consolidated journal publishing and editorial management systems than it was proof of any corrupt scholarship in the humanities.[89] More than anything, the hoax was shown to reveal persistent flaws and inconsistencies in peer review: a weak but interesting enough manuscript being sent out rather than desk rejected; a reviewer offering supportive albeit critical feedback; a peer review process failing to "uncover outright fraud,"[90] and so on. At its core, wrote Piedra in an editorial in *Qualitative Social Work,* the system relies on human judgment, good will, scholarly integrity, and intellectual honesty—all of which are susceptible to distortion.[91]

During this period, academics also grappled with the reality that the peer review system has been greatly compromised by notable instances of fraud, research misconduct, and academic dishonesty manifest across all disciplines and fields. In a letter to the *Chronicle*, Collins observed that "even 'objective' research can be done in bad faith"—citing a recent Harvard Medical School scandal in which thirty-one cardiology publications based on fabricated research were called to be retracted.[92] In instances when poor papers do make it through the system, the consequences can be far-reaching: external critique overrides academic expertise, authority is compromised or diminished, and social crises abound.[93] If research misconduct could be observed from all corners of academia, perhaps the political and ideological motivations of the hoax were worthy of greater scrutiny. Denzin and Giardina, for example, foregrounded just how politically

charged the landscape of higher education is at the present moment, surveying a wide range of attacks against the humanities and social sciences—all in some way amplified by the hoax.[94] For Spruce, Ojeda, and Breslow, the hoax served as a dishonest act intentionally designed to serve political ends: "Peer review is not simply about checks and balances, it is a process which relies on the principles of good faith and honesty, something that they intentionally corrupted."[95]

In the absence of trust and good faith, the hoax revealed more about the conditions of academic labor and the escalating demands of unpaid peer review.[96] Bergstrom argued that the hoaxers willfully betrayed "numerous editors and dozens of unconsenting peer reviewers [who] invested large amounts of time on bad-faith submissions."[97] Yoder, editor of the journal *Sex Roles*, described her role in a systematic vetting process that included desk-rejecting a prior submission, only to send out a second article (the ethnography of 'breastaurants') to three well-established experts.[98] The paper was accepted for publication after three rounds of intense revisions and careful editorial checking. Yoder went to great lengths to affirm the due diligence shown during the peer review process, offering to publicly share the details of the article's editorial processing. Of the twenty-six hoax articles written, eleven of the manuscripts received a total of ninety-seven suggestions of new scholarly literature; one article was submitted to two journals, receiving a total of six reviews.[99] The authors' "bad-faith" submissions exploited vulnerabilities in the process and severely compromised the integrity and trust that inform author-reviewer relations. As the hoax exposé unfolded, the hoaxers were also criticized for unethically drawing upon reviewer comments from a rejected paper to put forward an indictment of a targeted journal and field (sociology). In his work as peer reviewer for one of the journals, Schieber recounts having flagged one of the hoax submissions as being odd, ultimately recommending the article be rejected for publication.[100] As a first-time reviewer, he reflected on how best to offer a respectful and constructive rejection of the manuscript. In *n+1,* Afinogenov acknowledged how peer review comments figured as "a record of the careful emotional labor the journals' unpaid reviewers performed on behalf of someone they assumed was a struggling junior colleague."[101]

Such characterizations come closest to articulating the core rationale of the peer review system across disciplines. According to Bergstrom, "The purpose of peer review is first and foremost to improve manuscripts."[102] As far as boundary repair is concerned, this amorphous chorus of commentators was largely interested in presenting a critique of peer review (real and ideal) in the interests of advancing much needed solutions. The work to be done, Piedra noted, is to reaffirm the importance of peer review as a trusted and proven mechanism to "evaluate scholarship and *improve* promising pre-publication manuscripts."[103] For journals and disciplines to sufficiently protect themselves, they must institute "fail-safe" processes of their own, including editorial gatekeeping, rigorous peer review, and the post-acceptance review of research materials.[104] In responding to the hoaxers' assertion that universities should "fix this problem," *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* editor Sandra Thomas suggested that the solution lies with the editors and reviewers of academic journals.[105] To minimize the appearance of bias, reviewers should be called upon to decline offers to review work for which they hold either favorable or negative reactions. In addition, journal editors must not only continue to evaluate the quality and breadth of peer evaluations, they must also offer training, feedback, and mentorship to their reviewers.[106] Any failure to uphold the standards and rigors of peer review, she concluded, could lead to the contamination of the scholarly literature.

To mitigate against future deceptions, academics proposed a number of solutions and improvements: the implementation of an open peer review system; increased opportunities for authors to recommend potential reviewers; combining open access publishing with multiple iterations of public peer review discussion; and ethical checks and acknowledgments on the part of authors.[107] Petrzela, for one, stated that there's "no excuse for shoddy peer review," hopeful that the hoax might "inspire new, more intense forms of scrutiny" between major and minor

(sub)fields.[108] To produce the greatest transparency, Arden went so far as to call upon journals and publishers to remove paywalls so as to make academic literature freely available to the public; doing so would make the intellectual bankruptcy of compromised journals most apparent. For all the above misgivings about ongoing challenges and failures, the likes of Grech would affirm the strengths of the peer review system to uphold epistemological credibility and authority—even in a culture vulnerable to academic hoaxes and fraud.

On the question of the value of peer review, the hoax is instructive in that it lays bare the systemic vulnerabilities inherent in the system, but it also reaffirms the crucial role of reviewers, editors, and authors laboring to produce important contributions to knowledge. Karen Staller, co-editor of *Qualitative Social Work,* penned an editorial on the internal dynamics of peer review, albeit from the perspective of the referees.[109] In her reflection on the hoax and its implications for academia, Staller pointed to how the social and professional dynamics at work within peer review could be negatively impacted as a result of the hoax. Instead of approaching authors in terms of good intentions and their submissions in terms of good faith, the culture of peer review could just as easily begin on "presumptions of deception, fraud, and untruthfulness."[110] To submit to a culture rooted in suspicion rather than honesty or integrity would transform university communities into "more dangerous and less civil places."[111] To avoid this undesirable outcome, the good will and judgment expressed by editors and reviewers must come to represent the norm in the culture of peer review. Importantly, correctives to the grievances addressed via the hoax can and do take shape in unexciting ways that do not involve ridicule, shame, or embarrassment. Striphas reinforced this point in drawing on the hoax as a rallying point for scholarly communities to increase their investments in "maintaining, repairing, and renovating the material, discursive, and interpersonal supports" that are the hallmark of academic life.[112]

Anomalous Activities

Like the critical incidents and events outlined above, hoaxes constitute aberrations within a given field, norm, or practice; they also come to represent anomalies in otherwise stable realms of representation. Although hoaxing can be regarded as a ubiquitous cultural form, its prevalence is far less well established in academia. When hoaxes do arise in higher education, however, these anomalous cases tend to garner greater attention. So rare are hoaxes in academia that history professors such as Smith (2018) immediately championed hoaxing as an ingenious rhetorical form capable of "breathing new life into the carcass of history" and into the life of ideas.[113] It is thus unsurprising that the Sokal Affair (or *Social Text* hoax) emerged as the primary touchstone and point of comparison for this hoax. Commentators observed that Pluckrose, Lindsay, and Boghossian's more elaborate project shared a general blueprint with Sokal's. Reference to other notable hoaxes was muted. The relatively low number of academic hoaxes carried out over the past three decades offers a baseline for thinking about how these forms of deception come to register as aberration or anomaly. According to the hoaxers, who were given space in *USA Today* to publish an opinion piece about their project, anomalies are best conceived of as "fringe theories" originating in academic journals, funneled through "a broken system," and later accepted as tomorrow's buzzwords.[114] Concepts such as toxic masculinity, white fragility, cultural appropriation, and microagressions, they contend, have helped shape "cynically biased perspectives on men, masculinity, heterosexuality and whiteness." In this view, perceived anomalies such as fringe theories occupy a crucial place in popular media discourse because they have the power to shape much larger debates and discussions. Because the hoaxers present these buzzwords as ill-conceived and harmful, any inroads these theories make pose an affront to Western empiricism and epistemology.[115] The hoax's success is most acutely observed in the "feeding of a popular narrative on the right that

universities are overrun by 'tenured radicals' hawking fringe ideas to their innocent students."[116]

The hoax as anomaly became a singularly powerful point that eventually gave rise to a number of counterpoints. If the hoaxers positioned the corruption of scholarship in the humanities as representing a larger expression of disrepute on the academic left, their critics argued that such synecdochic examples permeate across all fields, especially in purportedly non-ideological and empirical ones. For Lăzăroiu, "A sting run on practically any empirical discipline would have returned the same outcomes" due to the vulnerabilities of the peer review system.[117] Addressing researchers engaging in both qualitative and quantitative analyses, Yoder presented her case that these breaches are likely to occur in any discipline where actors are willing to fabricate or modify datasets.[118] To celebrate the efforts of fraudsters in any academic field, she warned, is to undermine the importance of evidence-based scholarship. What is consistently clear in cases of research misconduct and fraud is the extreme lengths to which fraudsters will go to have something bogus published.[119] Such transgressive behavior has incited strong criticism from academics, but certain precincts (e.g., the sciences) have been more successful in shielding and deflecting their deviance.[120]

In the context of this study, the hoaxers were described as outsiders knowingly engaging in unethical behavior. Lăzăroiu, for example, noted the vigor with which the hoaxers "disregarded pivotal professional and ethical principles," a concession that opened the door for them to ridicule and mock their targets, engage in data fabrication, and place unnecessary additional strains on peer reviewers.[121] Striphas described the hoaxers as "abyss-artists" and likened them to Sokal, whose *Social Text* hoax was designed "to aggrandize himself and his own political positions by attempting to burn [the cultural studies] field to the ground";[122] for Pluckrose and company, the point of their hoax was cruelty, that is, the shame and humiliation of their targets.[123] Piedra depicted the group as "outside agitators" seeking to undermine the work of practitioner-scholars whose work departs from traditional norms and produces alternative perspectives.[124] Thomas referred to the scandal as an "appalling hoax" carried out by "three conspirators."[125] Finally, Yoder referred to the hoaxers as showing a "complete lack of integrity" and as proving "so maliciously deceitful" that they were able to "scam the system" by submitting fraudulent research for consideration.[126]

The appearance of anomalies encouraged the performance of boundary work; it also instigated boundary repair, much of which cast the broader controversy as an opportunity to present a vision for increased ethical considerations, collegiality, and service. Despite the unwelcome manner in which the critique was leveled, Piedra insisted that the event should give researchers reason to pause. Because breaches of professional trust are not easily repaired, Afinogenov held up the example of academics performing a "duty of care for authors" within the peer review process.[127] Writing in *American Historical Review,* editor Alex Lichtenstein surmised that although history may be "a field relatively immune to such malicious practices," like many other fields its vulnerability can be seen in its predisposition to publishing new and original work.[128] Despite the creation of peer review safeguards to ensure credibility, trust among academics remained fundamental to ensuring "faith in knowledge and research."[129] Among many of the more hopeful responses to the scandal, Denzin and Giardina made light of these grievances to present a challenge to qualitative researchers, to reaffirm the role of critical researchers in their respective fields: "We still have a job do to. Let's get to it."[130]

Repairing Peer Review, Upholding the Institution

The sensational story arc, the engineered spectacle and ensuing controversy, as well as the engaged public discussion and debate help firmly situate this hoax as a "critical incident" that incited the academic community "to reflect on its practices and protect its ranks."[131] The event has proven to be a rich site from which to interpret how academics make sense of both deception and hoaxing via metadiscourse, especially in opinion pieces and editorials. In framing academics as an "interpretive community" responding to a critical incident, this study highlights the extent to which responses to deception, hoaxing, and misconduct are very much contingent upon the actors involved. For example, academics publishing responses in *Quillette* differed in tone and outlook from scholars offering comment in the *Chronicle*. Whereas scholars in *Quillette* might agree that postmodern (read: critical constructivist/social constructionist) scholarship has undermined the role of empiricism and scientific research, researchers in the *Chronicle* might hold differing views surrounding the value of different forms of critical inquiry.

Others yet championed the ways in which the hoaxers struck a blow against ideological research, and this proved to be an important strand of the larger debate. The hoaxers and their supporters argued that with the right vocabulary and with the ability to flatter the ideological sensibilities of peer reviewers and editors, publication in a "grievance studies" journal—no matter the content—was most assured. Such bad-faith submissions were challenged on a number of fronts, from those decrying data fabrication and manipulation as deeply unethical practices to others criticizing the lack of integrity involved in subverting the peer review process. The ethical and epistemological fault lines were being actively drawn by a whole range of actors, virtually all of whom were writing as insiders of the institution. While the boundary work performed by this disparate group lacked coherence overall, discussion regarding what constitutes both acceptable conduct and legitimate research formed core aspects of the debates. The academic hoax designed by Pluckrose, Lindsay, and Boghossian has given greater visibility to the "credibility contests"[132] and "contest cultures"[133] that exist in higher education today, many of which remain unsettled.

Ultimately, the performance of boundary work and boundary repair was most clearly observed in the editorials published in academic journals, many of which were either directly or indirectly targeted via the hoax. Nowhere was the issue of peer review more apparent than in the reflections and musings of journal editors. In these deliberations, editors described the hoaxers as anomalous actors engaged in deviant activities; they were characterized as outside agitators, conspirators, abyss-artists, and bad-faith actors working to explicitly undermine the epistemological foundations of already marginalized (sub)fields. Editors affirmed their practices and protocols were sound, albeit vulnerable to attack. Although fallible, editors and reviewers were said to have approached their duties with reverence and integrity. Despite the vulnerabilities exploited and made visible by the hoax, boundary work served to reinforce the legitimacy of peer review, at the same time that various actors proposed solutions, reinforcements, or changes. In attempting to have the hoaxers symbolically removed or expulsed from the field(s) to which they did not belong, editors worked to repair the boundaries of acceptable practice in order to reaffirm their authority and credibility in their respective research communities. Such activities are consistent with the expulsion-based boundary work described in Carlson and Berkowitz wherein anomalous bad faith actors are repudiated for engaging in dubious or unethical practices.[134] In disavowing the fundamental dishonesty and the malicious deceit of the hoaxers, editors chose to highlight the core aspects of shared academic life that needed to be cultivated and maintained, chief among them collegiality and trust in the production of knowledge.

Conclusion

In October 2018, academics from across the spectrum seized the opportunity to address an expansive and complex hoax in various fora—including but not limited to editorials and opinion pieces in news outlets and higher education trade publications. A majority of responses took issue with the hoax for a variety of reasons: namely, on grounds of unethical behavior, flawed methodology, and mean-spiritedness. Academic supporters of the hoax celebrated the ingenuity and cleverness involved in exposing what they deemed the weakest scholarly disciplines and publishing venues. For the latter, the hoax confirmed the lack of rigor, integrity, and credibility in the humanities and social sciences.

What we learn in appraising the public statements of academics during this period is that the performance of boundary work is most expressly articulated by the actors most closely aligned with academia and/or academic publishing. The actors with the deepest investments in upholding the peer review system and academic scholarship make use of the most official channels and venues to perform boundary work, to reaffirm the importance of scholarly publication, as well as their place within it. The outsider-anomalous actors are also cast as having deep commitments to scholarship (three scholars: two of whom have earned doctorates) but deploy non-conforming practices (the hoax), and make use of untraditional platforms and venues to challenge the boundaries of certain areas of scholarship.

The public statements of this "interpretive community" confirm that although the institution of academic publishing is inherently flawed, peer review remains a trusted and proven system. The hoaxers may have made a larger cautionary point that real scholarship can at times be replaced with rhetoric that aligns with one's political beliefs;[135] they may not, however, have achieved their stated objectives of "exposing the reality of grievance studies, which is corrupting academic research."[136] For the vast majority of academics, the peer review system works in the most established disciplines and publishing venues. Only the most vulnerable to deception were taken in by the hoax, and even those deceived still affirmed having followed rigorous protocols. Breaches in trust and deviations from professional norms made possible the acceptance of seven hoax articles through peer review. These breaches precipitated heated public discussion and sustained calls for boundary repair. As much as the hoaxers labored to expose the perceived corruption of humanities and social sciences research, the hoax was most effective in provoking the performance of boundary work, especially in terms of upholding longstanding norms and ideals tied to peer review and academic labor. Future studies concerning the use of deception in academic research and labor would benefit from the scholarship on hoaxing and boundary work. Although this study has focused exclusively on published commentaries, opinion columns, and editorials, future research on the discourse generated via social media would assist in expanding our understanding of the boundary work performed by academics.

On a final note, the "grievance studies" hoax represents a significant moment of reflection for humanities and social sciences researchers, especially cultural studies scholars. Although academics were largely successful in reaffirming the boundaries surrounding acceptable practices in academic publishing and labor within academia, the hoaxers were equally successful in discrediting and downright ridiculing the reputation of certain journals and fields in and across popular Internet media. Since the hoax, the group has earned unparalleled visibility through appearances on the Joe Rogan Experience podcast and the Jordan Peterson YouTube channel, securing them hundreds of thousands of listeners and viewers across platforms—not to mention their growing popularity on Twitter. The hoaxers have most certainly connected with publics far beyond academia, but who no less are interested in seeing corners of higher education painted with the same faulty brushwork. There is little doubt that the "grievance studies" term will continue to be taken up by the (far) right. The byline in the first *New York Times* piece on the hoax announced "another culture war, another hoax inflicted on left-wing academics."[137] The academic culture wars first stoked by the Sokal Affair in the 1990s have returned with even greater force. If the goal

of this incarnation was to discredit, call into question, and dismiss research on the Left, the hoax should give cultural studies scholars a moment to pause and reflect on how best to respond to these antagonistic forces. As Staller declared in her post-hoax editorial, "After creating a brief uproar in the mainstream media, the topic has now been left to academics to ponder its implications."[138] How academics respond to the ripple effects of this hoax remains to be seen.

Notes

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corruption in Grievance Studies," https://youtu.be/kVk9a5Jcd1k < https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://youtu.be/kVk9a5Jcd1k__;!!KwNVnqRv!TbPupZqYfFUyF024l3tRHfLx37mYpjuF).

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124. Piedra, "The Gift of a Hoax," 154.
125. Thomas, "An Incredible Hoax," 913.
126. Yoder, "Hoaxed Editor."
127. Afinogenov, "Orthodoxxed!"
128. Lichtenstein, "From the Editor's Desk," xvii.
129. Lichtenstein, "From the Editor's Desk," xix.
130. Denzin and Giardina, "Qualitative Inquiry at a Crossroads," 13.
131. Tandoc, Jenkins, and Craft, "Fake News," 674.
132. Gieryn, *Cultural Boundaries*.
133. Fredal, "Perennial Pleasures."
134. Carlson and Berkowitz, "Emperor Lost His Clothes."
135. Piedra, "The Gift of a Hoax," 153.
136. Pluckrose, Lindsay, and Boghossian, "Academic Grievance Studies."
137. See Egginton, "What the 'Grievance Studies' Hoax."
138. Staller, "Darker Side of a Hoax," 149.

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Enacting Law: The Dramaturgy of the Courtroom on the Contemporary Stage

by Steff Nellis | Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT Although historical research into twentieth-century theatrical tribunals is widespread, the recurring theme of justice in contemporary performance practices remains largely unexplored. However, an increasing number of twenty-first-century artists have begun relying on structures of the court. By creating theatrical tribunals, these artists try to create a space for an alternative jurisdiction. However, a clear typology of this tribunal genre in the contemporary performing arts is still lacking. This article therefore aims to characterize theatrical tribunals. In the first section, I describe the setting of the courtroom as a theatrical place in which law gets enacted or performed. Following several scholars that already stated the important spectacular aspects of the legal system, I discuss the dramaturgy of the courtroom as a specific dramatic place with its own scenography, script, and dramatis personae. Next, by analyzing the dramaturgy of the courtroom, I distinguish two categories within the tribunal genre: (1) re-enactments of preeminent lawsuits that heavily rely on twentieth-century documentary practices and (2) performative pre-enactments of futuristic trials that have not yet been held or cannot be held because of systemic shortcomings. Finally I examine how contemporary theatrical tribunals could contribute to the enlargement of public knowledge on historical and contemporary examples of injustice, and whether they could obtain effective changes in our societies.

KEYWORDS courtroom, courtroom drama, justice, performance, pre-enactment, re-enactment, theatre

Preface

In June 2020, sixty years after the independence of the Democratic Republic of Congo, King Filip I of Belgium expressed his deepest regrets for the acts of violence and brutality inflicted by his ancestor, Leopold II, during Belgium's rule over Congo.[1] Although this expression of regret can be seen as a big step in recognizing the colonial horrors, the king did not offer any official apology to the surviving relatives of the families involved, which met with great opposition.[2] After all, Belgium has a troubling colonial past. The Democratic Republic of Congo used to be a Belgian colony in Central Africa from 1908 until its independency in 1960. Before 1908, King Leopold II privately ruled over the Congo Free State, eventually earning an infamous reputation due to the atrocities he perpetrated onto the local inhabitants causing his legacy to be widely known as one of the greatest international colonial scandals of the early twentieth century.[3] Today, however, there are still more than seventeen glorifying statues and busts in Belgium praising the former colonial ruler.

In the spring of 2020, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement, several colonial monuments and glorifying statues and busts of King Leopold II were taken down and even removed from public spaces by official institutes.[4] Furthermore, left wing

politicians introduced a concrete legislative proposal to explicitly include the Belgian colonial history in the final attainment levels of primary as well as secondary education.[5] This served as a manner of countering the general unawareness of the colonial history and the atrocities committed by King Leopold II on the part of many Congolese citizens. Unfortunately, the proposals was rejected by the center-right government: the proposal for the resolution on explicitly including the colonization and the corresponding decolonization process in the final attainment levels in Flemish primary and secondary education was rejected. Above, the proposal for a resolution on strengthening historical awareness and critical thinking about the present and the past in Flemish education was also rejected.[6]

Subsequently, Chokri Ben Chikha, a Flemish director and the artistic leader of the performance collective Action Zoo Humain, launched a call on Facebook claiming he and his collective would be able to help the Belgian government to respectfully deal with the colonial past.[7] After all, Action Zoo Humain does have a lot of experience in organizing lawsuits that deal with racial abuse, colonialism, and racism. Referring to their artistic *Truth Commission* (2013-2018, in Dutch: *De Waarheidscommissie*), a recurring live performance organized in actual courts of justice in Ghent (2013), Cape Town (2014), Antwerp (2016), Mechelen (2017) and Brussels (2018), Action Zoo Humain offered their help to develop an alternative courtroom that would deal with colonial malpractices, both in the past and in the present.[8] (Figure 1)

The setting of the performance in an actual court building increases its veracity. One cannot but wonder: "Is this an actual court of justice in which real court proceedings take place"? Besides Action Zoo Humain, an increasing number of twenty-first-century artists have begun relying on structures of the court. By creating theatrical tribunals, these artists are trying to create a space for an alternative jurisdiction. However, a clear typology of this tribunal genre in the contemporary performing arts is still lacking. This article therefore aims to characterize and analyze theatrical tribunals. In the first section of this article, I describe the setting of the courtroom as a theatrical place in which law gets enacted or performed. Following several scholars that already stated the important spectacular aspects of the legal system, I discuss the dramaturgy of the courtroom as a specific dramatic place with its own scenography, script, and dramatis personae. Next, by analyzing the dramaturgy of the courtroom on the contemporary stage, I distinguish two categories within the tribunal genre: (1) re-enactments of preeminent lawsuits that heavily rely on twentieth-century documentary practices and (2) performative pre-enactments of futuristic trials that have not yet been held or cannot be held because of systemic shortcomings. Finally, in the wake of *Lateral*'s issue on Leveraging Justice < https://csalateral.org/archive/issue/5-2/> , edited by Janelle Reinelt and María Estrada-Fuentes, I briefly examine how contemporary theatrical tribunals such as the *Truth Commission*, among other performances, could contribute to the enlargement of public knowledge on both historical and contemporary examples of injustice, and whether they could possibly obtain effective changes in the policies of our societies (2016).[9]



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Image-1-Steff-Nellis.jpg>

The audience in the Belgium Senate in Brussels during a performance of *De Waarheidscommissie (2018)*. Photo by Kurt Van der Elst, used with permission.

The Dramaturgy of the Courtroom

"Justice has to be seen to be done," is a famous dictum from 1924 that was laid down by Lord Hewart, one of the former Lord Chief Justices of the United Kingdom. Hewart indicated that it is important for justice to be seen to be done in order that no misunderstanding or suspicion of improbity can lead to the abolishment of a conviction. In the same way, as Erika Fischer-Lichte states in her influential *The Semiotics of Theater*,

> the cultural system of theater is based on two constituent elements that must exist if it is to be theater: the actor and the spectator. These two constituent elements implicitly contain a third. For the actor is only an actor and not just a person A, B, or C to the extent that s/he portrays someone else, X, Y or Z, i.e., plays a role. In other words, the minimum preconditions for theater to be theater are that person A represents X while S looks on.[10]

Both law and theatre require the external eye of an onlooker to existentially become the cultural system they ought to be. This is endorsed by Alan Read, who indicates an ontological connection between the acts of performance in law and theatre: "[Law] operates through *action*, not just a mental operation. It is made up of performing and spectating."[11] In this way, the courtroom can be considered as a highly theatrical space in which all involved are nothing more than a bunch of actors trying to play their best part. Furthermore, Peter Goodrich states there is a baroque coinage describing law as *'theatrum Veritatis et iustitiae*,' the theatre of justice and truth.[12] Following Goodrich, law

thus has a specific tradition of drama, both seen and unseen. Referring to Kenji Yoshino's book, *Covering* (2006), Goodrich refers to the theatrical modes of law as "covering," a form of exposing and concealing at the same time:

> No covering, no law. So here, or so at least we may suspect, the life of the law is covering, not the *ars moriendi* or art of shrouding, of dying, but rather the rhetorical and highly figurative art of lawyering. So covering is necessary for law, indeed brings it to life, because without the theatre of covering, the life giving social art of playing the role of the lawyer, there would be no law. *Lex animata* or living law is only made possible by covering.[13]

Thus, the courtroom is a place of covering: a theatre stage on which law gets performed and thus enacted. Consequently, considering its spectacular dramaturgy to try to collect evidence by re-enacting the crime committed, the courtroom should be studied in a theatrical way. However, the dramaturgy of the courtroom can be approached from different fields of study, among which law studies, cultural studies, anthropology, theatre and performance studies but also architecture and interior design. For example, Lawrence Corrigan, Heather Robertson, and Bruce Anderson propose that the courtroom operates as a "performing space" because it can be conceived theatrically, "staged by its principal actors (judge, jury, lawyers, and defendant) and a putative audience (the courtroom gallery and the actors themselves as an audience of their own performance)."[14] In the same way, Marett Leiboff states in her recent study, *Towards a Theatrical Jurisprudence* that "law is a curated practice, and that lawyers, and by extension the courts, are its curators, its custodians, who need to take care of and be responsible for law."[15] Thus, enacting law is a specific performative practice. More specifically, in representing the rule of law, court cases enable the members of a political community to find their place within the greater *theatrum mundi,* the narrative of society. In this sense, and following Julie Saada, every trial can be considered a "show-trial," understood as a didactic performance that consists of a judicial ritual in which the spectator is taught the feelings s/he should experience.[16]

Saada's remarks on the social function of law are significant for all forms of jurisdiction, but especially for the infamous genre of postwar tribunals that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. As shown by Knop and Riles, after World War II, the Allied powers established several international tribunals.[17] The Nuremberg Tribunal can be considered as one of the most well-known examples in the West, but there were also set up Eastern tribunals as the Tokyo Tribunal.[18] Ever since, the international community set up tribunals to deal with major violations against human rights in postwar societies, among which are Germany (1946), Israel (1951–1972) Yugoslavia (1993), Rwanda (1994), and South-Africa (1996). Moreover, at the beginning of the new century, an official International Criminal Court to judge political leaders accused of international crimes was established in the Hague, in the Netherlands. As indicated by Saada, these kinds of international tribunals are meant to enhance a feeling of shared indignation and to strengthen the solidarity between citizens in a by war or politics divided society.[19] Ever since the second half of the twentieth century and especially from the 1990s onwards, the shape taken by these international criminal tribunals transformed the main focus on jurisdiction from retribution and punishment towards reconciliation and restoration. As a form of collective emotional experience, the international tribunals aimed for catharsisas a dramatic form of transitional justice that marked an emotional process of purification and going through the pain caused by the crime.

Law seeks to enhance a form of catharsis from the part of its spectators, as does theatre. Thus, besides the morphological similarities mentioned above, law and theatre share a sociological function too, emphasizing the restorative function of both cultural systems. However, Peter Goodrich and Valérie Hayaert indicate in their groundbreaking study, *Genealogies of Legal Vision*, that the study of these theatrical dimensions of law, the dramaturgy of a trial, the scenography of the courtroom, and the performance of governance have been severely neglected up until now:

> The visual domain of legal performance, the ornate and distinctive filigree of law's social presence has been treated as profoundly secondary and marginal to the business of rationalizing doctrine and cohering texts, and yet [...], the image is the mode of law's opening to the social and simultaneously the medium of its transmission.[20]

Indeed, the courtroom must be considered as a spectacular ritual that is able to manipulate images, evidence, and even people. Moreover, as is endorsed by Koskenniemi, any tribunal consists of commonly known facts on the one hand, and constructed facts arising from the trial itself on the other.[21] Thus, law's theatrical modes enable the production of knowledge on innocence and guilt to be covered in a profoundly subjective fiction that is easily mistaken for an objective reality. Therein lies a danger that should not be underestimated since history has shown the theatricality of law can easily be abused in order to stage unfair political show trials in which the outcome is already predetermined. As Julie Cassiday demonstrates, the format of the trial can be seen as an arena for propaganda to stage political lessons, as was the case in the *Moscow Trials* that followed the Russian Revolution from the 1920s onwards.[22]

Yet, law's theatricality offers some opportunities as well. From 1945 onwards, a deliberate amount of real live trials was being re-enacted in theatre. Although criminal trials and international tribunals were meant to enhance the feeling of shared indignation and solidarity between citizens, by no means all people felt involved within the trial. From the same desire for the democratization of the legal system, the re-enactments of famous lawsuits within the performing arts aimed at including public opinion within the process of judgement itself. In this way, the collective ritualistic experience could be doubled and opened up to a wider audience, which can be seen as the most important political stake of the tribunal *genre* in theatre. In the following, I outline the dramaturgical approach within theatrical adaptations of lawsuits. In what ways does the above-mentioned dramaturgy of the courtroom reiterate itself within the confines of a theatre hall when artists enact law on stage? In the next section, I discuss present-day examples of performances that re-enact historical lawsuits as a continuation of the twentieth-century documentary tradition. Subsequently, another highly topical strategy to engage with jurisdiction in theatre will be presented: the theatrical pre-enactment of unprecedented lawsuits.

Re-enacting Law

For several decades now, academics have been studying the popularity of courtroom dramas as a specific genre in the history of theatre.[23] After all, the connection between the court and the stage is as old as both disciplines themselves. As pointed out by Klaas Tindemans, law and theatre share historical antecedents since ancient tragedy and primitive law in early democratic Greece show several similarities.[24] First of all, Tindemans

points out the representative character of both disciplines. Similar to the tragedy, which presents itself on stage as a fictional narrative, courts aim at building up a faithful, mimetic reconstruction of a crime. Furthermore, Tindemans mentions the crucial moments of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* in the tragedy. These terms respectively stand for recognition, the moment of insight for the tragic hero, and the subsequent reversal of the tragic course. In a court case, this can be translated to the burden of proof and the evidence that would lead to a well-founded opinion of the jury and the verdict of the judge.[25] Finally, Tindemans also ascribes an ethical aspect to both law and tragedy: the evaluation of the intentions of the accused or the tragic hero, and their accountability or sense of reason.[26] Karel Vanhaesebrouck points out some similarities as well, though he approaches the intertwinement between law and theatre in a more general fashion:

> Since its origins, theatre has been the perfect place for actors and viewers, together, to experiment with complex questions by playing and watching. Oftentimes, these questions are of a specific legal nature: the failure and functioning of direct democracy in the ancient Greek tragedies, the complex laws of sovereignty and succession in early modern tragedies, marital intrigues and their legal consequences in comedies and so on. Regularly, the courtroom itself is used as a theatrical framework, not only as a dramaturgical or scenographic tool, but also to expose the fundamentally theatrical character of the legal system itself. Theatre thus exposes the human failure of a system whose objectivity is its core value.[27]

As is endorsed by Vanhaesebrouck, the theatrical set up of fictitious lawsuits throughout history was often meant as a means to involve people in processes of judgement. According to Kenji Yoshino, this was absolutely the case in Shakespeare's Elizabethan Tragedies.[28] Similarly, the plays of seventeenth century neoclassicist French playwrights such as Pierre Corneille, Jean Racine, and Molière often featured courtroom settings and characters that took on roles similar to those of a prosecutor, defense attorney, and judge. However, especially twentieth-century dramatists triumphed in creating fictional counterparts to preeminent lawsuits, as, for example, the Nuremberg Trials (1946) and the O. J. Simpson Trial (1994–1995). These have been broadly documented by theatre scholars in recent years. Yasco Horsman, for example, claims that the re-enactment of legal cases installs a "theatre of justice" in which the past can be staged, mourned, and eventually, worked through.[29] Doubling the dramaturgy of the courtroom on stage opens up the public discussion to a wider audience, which offers the tribunal genre an important political stake.

Referring to Shoshana Felman, Horsman suggests we need art to face up to a past that cannot be closed: What cannot be articulated on a legal stage needs an altogether different, literary theater of justice.[30] Thus, the tribunal genre in theatre goes on where legal jurisdiction stops. In this light, Marett Leiboff, among others, characterizes theatre as an important training ground for law.[31] By re-enacting real lawsuits in theatre, the dramaturgy of the courtroom gets doubled on stage, bringing a wider audience into a closer relationship with the ritualistic practice of judgement. The same is true for Minou Arjomand, who has mapped the most important theatrical stagings of court cases from the period between the Second World War and 1968 in *Staged: Show Trials, Political Theater, and the Aesthetics of Judgement*. Arjomand argues, "While legal judgment can only address the past, theater can teach judgement as a continual process."[32] Furthermore, Arjomand states that the legacy of these plays, based on some of the century's most infamous lawsuits, is now almost as well known as the court cases themselves. In her

study, she pays special attention to the twentieth-century plays of documentary artists Erwin Piscator, Bertolt Brecht, and Peter Weiss:

> The era of postwar trials – the Nuremberg trials, the Eichmann trial, the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial – was also an era of trial plays. In these decades, trial plays not only flourished but also became a way to articulate the role of theater in postwar society. These plays sought to do some of the same work as postwar trials themselves, which were struggling to interrogate, represent, and judge unprecedented crimes.[33]

According to Rebecca Schneider, the term re-enactment entered into increased circulation in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century art, theatre and performance circles: "The practice of replaying or re-doing a precedent event, artwork, or act has exploded in performance-based art alongside the burgeoning of historical reenactment."[34] Within the practice of re-enactment, the clear divide between the fictitious and the real court case was often lost, especially because of the verbatim and documentary strategies the artists employed to stage their re-enactments. Literal quotations from textual and audiovisual sources were recontextualized on stage by using footage and verbatim materials like court reports, witnesses' testimonials, and other sources that had been derived from real legal cases. Considering today's tribunal plays, we must still acknowledge the value of the twentieth-century documentary techniques for the dramaturgical approach artists use within current court case performances. Nonetheless, these techniques are applied in a completely different manner. As their historical antecedents, contemporary "reenactment artists" use a documentary approach to establish a sort of democratic legal practice within theatre.[35] However, as stated by Frederik Le Roy,

> the new generation no longer endorses the conviction that theatre from a critical outside position can show a reality that is 'more real' or 'more objective' than the reality that the media or education predicts. This generation uses theatre precisely to problematize the constant negotiation between reality and the inevitable representations of that reality.[36]

In this sense, I refer to today's tribunal plays as "artistic historical re-enactments." Referring to Timmy de Laet (2016), these artistic-historical re-enactments do not shy away from unfolding a politically outspoken orientation as they aim to respond to, and sometimes even intervene in, our socio-cultural reality. Unlike the widespread, standard format of re-enactment which often presents itself as apolitical and ideologically neutral, the artistic historical re-enactment aims to install a "critical revision by strategically balancing between factual depiction and subjective reinterpretation."[37] Hence, according to Katherine Johnson, re-enactments can prompt us to contemplate how to reflect, resist, and affect historical events now and in the future.[38] A very clear example can be found in Milo Raus's 2009 performance *The Last Days of the Ceausescus,* a re-enactment of the notorious trial of Nicolae Ceausescu, the Romanian communist politician who was executed with his wife in 1989.[39] *The Last Days of the Ceausescus* accurately illustrates in what way a political mock trial can grow into an artistic-historical re-enactment. (Figure 2)



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IMAGE-6-Steff-Nellis.jpg>

Figure 2. A close up of the actor who plays the part of Nicolae Ceaucescu during a performance of *The Last Days of the Ceaucescus* (2009) by Milo Rau and the IIPM, used with permission.

The lawsuit and execution of Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife could be followed on television all over the world. As the images of the two planes that flew into the Twin Towers on 9/11, the Ceausescu trial is a well-known "event" in collective memory. However, as Rau indicates, the available images only show one side of the story:

> The only known images of the event are from that live broadcast but show only a specific perspective on the event because the camera was fixed on the corner where the couple was sitting. We took this broadcast as our starting point, and by making a precise reenactment of the broadcast—frame by frame, second by second—and placing it on the stage we were able to open up the camera's angle.[40]

Rau uses the ambiguous space between reality and fiction and plays a game with the objectivity of history. As Frederik Le Roy states, by transforming the television broadcast into a dramaturgy for the stage, and by relying on the testimonies of a few prominent attendees to connect the missing links, Rau critically questions shared truth and collective memory.[41] This trend, to fuse fact and fiction, is addressed by Carol Martin as "Theatre of the Real" in which she includes "documentary theatre, verbatim theatre, reality-based theatre, theatre-of-fact, theatre of witness, tribunal theatre, nonfiction theatre, restored village performances, war and battle reenactments, and autobiographical theatre."[42] Following Martin, "theatre of the real intervenes in our understanding of the world through the particular distorting mirror of theatre."[43] Concerning Rau's performance on the Ceaucescus, we might conclude he tries to install a possible expression of Martin's "Theatre of the Real." While questioning the objective reality that law pretends to convey by offering another view on the story in his re-enactment of the trial, Rau does not aim to preach an alternative truth but rather highlights the ambiguous continuum between reality and fiction. After all, Rebecca Schneider recently indicated, re-enacting "may open an opportunity for rehearsing different historical response and, thus, if such a thing can be imagined, preenacting a different future for the past."[44]

In 2013, Rau put up two similar tribunal plays in Zurich and Moscow, respectively condemning *Die Weltwoche,* a right-wing populist Swiss magazine, for racism and discrimination, and the Russian government for significantly limiting the universal right to freedom of speech. While the latter was still based on previous mock trials against artists and curators, the first was an entirely new performance established by Rau himself. This evolution within the work of Rau can be seen as exemplary for the tribunal *genre* itself. Most artists that engage with the judicial in today's artistic climate no longer strive for re-imagining previous court cases by re-enacting them meticulously. Instead, they try to install new trials that critically question forms of injustice that are unprecedented in court. In this way, contemporary artists deploy the theatre as a rehearsal room for the staging of unprecedented juridical judgement. In doing so, they do not rely on the principles of reenactment, but instead on pre-enacting future lawsuits which have not yet taken place, or futuristic lawsuits which cannot take place yet because of institutional shortcomings caused by the rigorous legal system. Nonetheless, as Rebecca Schneider states, "In looking backward, reenactment looks forward. In looking forward, preenactment looks back."[45]

Pre-Enacting Justice

The political stakes that were hidden in twentieth-century re-enactments were most importantly focused on incorporating a broader audience in the judging of highly topical trials that had a major impact on society. In doing so, artists included documentary footage, court reports, and testimonies that were derived from real legal cases. In this sense, the dramaturgy of the courtroom was entirely copied and transferred to the theatrical, fictitious realm. Although contemporary artists that enact law on the contemporary stage still heavily rely on documentary materials, as did their historical antecedents, their strategy mostly differs from the latter. The aforementioned performances of Rau showed a clear transition in his work, developing from a re-enacting principle towards a pre-enacting method. In this section, I hope to demonstrate that Rau is not alone in his approach. By stressing the performative shift from re-enactment to pre-enactment that occurred in the last decade, I will try to demonstrate the important political stakes of the tribunal genre on the contemporary stage. In doing so, I intend to outline the specific format and methodology of the pre-enactment as a performance strategy that actively engages with the public and political realm. In addition to other examples, Chokri Ben Chikha's *Truth Commission*, introduced in the preface to this article, can be seen as a textbook case of this pre-enacting principle.

With their performance, Action Zoo Humain investigates whether contemporary debates about migration, discrimination and racism can have their origins in Belgian colonial history, more specifically in the exhibition of "the exotic other' as an attraction in facsimile villages on World Exhibitions.[46]Action Zoo Humain thus not only inscribes itself in the decolonization debate, but also responds directly to the demand of a group of experts from the United Nations who recently called on the Belgian government to acknowledge Belgium's colonial past by apologizing for it and providing more public interest in postcolonial affairs. After all, there still is a troubling lack of knowledge on the broad colonial history and the atrocities committed in the long twentieth century by Belgium, as became clear in the introduction to this article. In order to counteract the general unawareness, *Truth Commission* tackles themes such as racism, social exclusion, marginalization, and colonialism. Although the setting of the performances, which were all

staged in actual courtrooms or state institutions, is doubling the dramaturgy of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, the specific methods used to discuss the crime during the performance are deliberately unsettling. Besides the public hearing, other more artistic interventions like dance, public discussions of literary books and advertisements accused of racism, and even a memorial ritual, are included in the performance. (Figure 3) Moreover, the positioning of the spectator in a real courthouse enhances the feeling of involvement within the performance. According to Christel Stalpaert and Evelien Jonckheere, "We feel addressed by the place of action in the Truth Commission, both by the theatrical apparatus and its architecture."[47]



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Image-3-Steff-Nellis.jpg>

Figure 3. A dancing Chantal Loïal during a performance of *De Waarheidscommissie* (2018). Photo by Kurt Van der Elst, used with permission.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, inhabitants of European colonies were put on display in *zoos humains* during the world exhibitions. In Ghent, Antwerp, Brussels, and many other Belgian cities, these human zoos were "inhabited" by African citizens of Belgian Congo and other countries. However, because of the bad conditions, the primitiveness of their exploitation, and the extreme climate differences to which they were not accustomed, a lot of people got sick and, eventually, even died. Although the main topic of the performance remains focused on the exhibition of these people, Ben Chikha does not shy away from dealing with similar acts of injustices against people of colour in our contemporary society.[48] For example, in the 2018 version of the play, there is an actor, Nabil Mallat, who condemns the installation of present-day *zoos humain* by accusing a Flemish political party (N-VA) of racism.[49] This rightwing nationalist party was heavily criticized because they introduced a campaign against the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration using photographs from the German far-right political party,

Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), depicting women in niqab.[50] In this way, the performance not only condemns acts of racism and colonialism in Belgian history but also contemplates on how a society should deal with this colonial legacy in order to counteract current expressions of injustice. It would not be surprising to see the company adding another version of the *Truth Commission* to their project very soon, dealing with police brutality, George Floyd, and Black Lives Matter.[51]

Today, a growing group of artists that engage with judgement in theatre is reconfiguring the scenography of the stage. Following Carol Martin's "Theatre of the Real"-doctrine, and in order to tackle highly topical debates and to transfer them to the stage, artists open up possibilities and try to bridge the gap between the audience and that which is depicted: essayistic lecture-performances, conversations on stage, semi-political conventions, and pseudo-scientific "Ted Talks" are all gaining ground in the performing arts.[52] Encounter, conversation and discussion between artists, experts, and spectators on all possible topics are central to this kind of performance practices. One of the most remarkable examples of these reconfiguring scenographies is Bruno Latour's *Parliament of Things*.[53] In this theory, Latour claims humankind refuses to recognize the rights, autonomy and agency of objects. Therefore, he argues for a vision of the world in which the value of objects and other entities plays an active role. One of Latour's methods is to pre-enact future political events in a theatrical setting, in order to be prepared for real events, and to be capable of actually pursuing justice.

Yet, what can be more effective to challenge regular judgement within the legal system on stage than an alternative courtroom? After all, the dramaturgy of the courtroom depicts a much more concrete setting to judge all kinds of crimes. When specific charges are being taken to court, the indictments made by the artists can be dealt with in a more effective way. Therefore, the specific dramaturgy of the courtroom is gaining popularity within the performing arts again. Moreover, pre-enacting future lawsuits which have not yet taken place, or futuristic lawsuits that cannot take place yet because of institutional shortcomings encourage spectators to rethink the rigid, old, systemic ways of jurisdiction, and to reflect, instead, upon new imaginaries beyond regular proceedings.[54]

The term pre-enactment literally means to enact beforehand. In juridical language, pre-enactments are laws being discussed before they get approved. According to Francesca Laura Cavallo, in performance, "pre-enactments operate at the border between reality and fiction: creating fictionalized scenarios that toy with real fear, uncertainty and trust to invalidate strategies of governance and shift the wider population's perceptions of risk."[55] Inspired by the possibilities of a reconfigured dramaturgy, as for example in Latour's *Parliament of Things*, contemporary artists no longer rely on the principles of re-enacting law, but instead imagine new ways of ensuring and pre-enacting justice. Nevertheless, the dramaturgy of the courtroom gets completely transfigured by means of the implementation of inventive and inspirational juridical alternatives. Inspired by the establishment of the great international tribunals that dealt with crimes in a more progressive way, contemporary artists that set up theatrical lawsuits tend to rely on alternative court proceedings as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, transitional justice, restorative practices, and even embodied knowledge. The reconfigured dramaturgy of these legal pre-enactments responds to the shortcomings of regular jurisdiction, being too focused on retribution, guilt, and punishment instead of progress, recovery, and reconciliation.

Thus, current court case performances do not only bring a continuation of courtroom dramas based on artistic-historical re-enactments. Theatre is also founding futuristic tribunals that enact laws and legislation that previously did not exist, or which are not supported by the authorities. These alternative courts no longer focus on the past to draw lessons for the present, but rather focus on the present, the future, or the imagination. Deliberately changing the dramaturgy of the courtroom by including alternative forms of jurisdiction, contemporary artists rethink the ways in which the legal system is preoccupied with judgement and objectivity. In doing so, they make room for marginalized or unheard voices. In this sense, they resemble the aforementioned iconic international courts that wanted to set up people's tribunals that really listened to a broader public opinion. Hence, contemporary artistic tribunals not only raise awareness on the specific political subjects they treat, they also critically question the courtroom as an institution of judgement in itself.

In the *Truth Commission*, performers and spectators are brought together not only to judge the colonial past and its consequences today, but also to reflect on ways of dealing with contemporary forms of racism and colonialism, wishing to eliminate them in the future. (Figure 4) In 2018, when the performance was played for the fifth year, public debate in the media was marked by the sixtieth anniversary of Expo '58—The World Exhibition of Brussels in 1958—as well as the long-awaited reopening of the renovated Africa Museum in Tervuren. The Brussels Truth Commission therefore focuses on Belgium's colonial rule in Congo and more specifically on the exhibition of more than two hundred Congolese citizens in facsimile huts at the Brussels World Exhibition in 1958. As in the previous truth commissions, the aftermath of colonialism in contemporary Flemish society is also examined, including the integration class for non-Dutch-speaking newcomers, the problematic situation in Brussels' Maximilian Park, and the ingrained racism in everyday language. Commissioners and experts, including professors from various Flemish universities, together with surviving relatives and other witnesses including artists, actors, and authors, study the phenomenon of the *zoo humain* in its various forms by means of an historical analysis, personal testimonies, and performances.[56]



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Image-5-Steff-Nellis.jpg>

Figure 4. The audience voting on guilt or innocence during a performance of De Waarheidscommissie (2018). Photo by Kurt Van der Elst, used with permission.

Significantly, the *Truth Commission* is not a truth and reconciliation commission as in the historical South African TRC. After all, reconciliation would imply that the performance does reach consensus. According to Stalpaert and Jonckheere, the fact that this is not the case is precisely the strength of the performance: rather than defending one single conviction, the *Truth Commission* exposes the complexity of the debate itself, which generates a fascinating shift from moralism towards ethics.[57] In this way, Action Zoo Humain's reconfigured dramaturgy responds to the shortcomings of regular jurisdiction, being too focused on retribution, guilt, and punishment, but does not claim to actually achieve justice or reconciliation. Instead, spectators are encouraged to continue the discussion outside the theatre. Although the performance culminates in a vote on the various accusations, among which the aforementioned by Nabil Mallat, and these votes are recorded and delivered to the Belgian authorities, it never comes to a real verdict. Instead, they withdraw from the regular regressive court structure that would accuse and sentence a clear defendant and instead reflect upon a judicial system that can be seen as progressive and is pointed towards the future. Therefore, pre-enactments as the *Truth Commission* can be seen as a speculative thought exercise starting in theatre and gradually dispersing into the public sphere. But the question remains: what exactly is the political potential of these theatrical tribunals?

Towards Theatrical Justice

In the wake of *Lateral's* 2016 issue on *Leveraging Justice,* edited by Janelle Reinelt and María Estrada-Fuentes, I briefly examine how these theatrical tribunals could actually live up to the political stakes they seek to fulfill. To what extent do they contribute to the enlargement of public knowledge on historical and contemporary examples of injustice, and how can they possibly obtain effective changes in policy priorities regarding these injustices? The answer becomes clear in a couple of specific cases. After all, besides the examples mentioned earlier, Milo Rau created another highly influential theatrical trial. Similarly to Ben Chikha, Rau installed a new court in 2017 entitled *The Congo Tribunal*, considering the current civil war in Congo. Despite pointing out the fictional status of his tribunal to the public on several occasions, which he characterizes as fictitious, independent, imaginary and "of the people," he expresses a great desire that the collected material will be taken seriously and may lead to real court hearings in the future.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IMAGE-2-Steff-Nellis.jpg>

Figure 5. A courtroom sketch created during the Congo Tribunal (2017) and making fun of the fictional character of the tribunal. Illustration by Yves Kulondwa (aka Kayene), used with permission.

The Congo Tribunal is a site-specific court case performance that was first conducted in Bukavu (Congo) and later analysed by an international panel in Berlin, resulting in a 2017 documentary film that has traveled the world ever since. (Figure 5) In the absence of a real lawsuit that should have been set up by the international community to judge the systematic attacks on the Congolese population from 1994 onwards, Rau brought together various parties: the government, the opposition, victims, witnesses, (former) rebels, farmers, miners, activists, and local and international experts. By bringing together a multitude of voices in the project on the basis of documentary material, real testimonies and public interventions, Rau succeeded at organizing a quasi-formal gathering. In Congo, where the governor of Bukavu intervened in the debate from within the audience, the tribunal caused heated discussions that were taken up by the media and politicians. In the end, the government and a few large companies were held responsible by this fictional tribunal. In the Berlin Hearings, the World Bank and the European Union were convicted as well in a second verdict. When imperial abuses, sexual assault, colonialism, and other problems are neglected by the international community, theatre can publicly condemn these shortcomings within the real legal system by assembling public meetings itself, thereby claiming a voice in the debate that can counteract the dominant point of view. While real lawsuits emphasize legal responsibility, theatrical tribunals focus on moral responsibility. This shift is exemplary for contemporary court case performances, which is why the tribunal genre is highly desirable to build upon, to complete and even to precede regular proceedings, trials, and tribunals.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IMAGE-4-Steff-Nellis.jpg>

Figure 6. A courtroom sketch figuring 'Witness J' during the Congo Tribunal (2017). Illustration by Yves Kulondwa (aka Kayene), used with permission.

Furthermore, the outcome of Rau's *Congo Tribunal* (2017) was a great success both locally and internationally because of the public space created for those community members who normally cannot make their voices heard. (Figure 6) Following on Rau's tribunal, other local meetings and "court hearings" have been held in different places on the initiative of local governments and activists. These tribunals can also be understood as theatrical, and therefore as safe, tolerant zones in which those involved try to meet each other to discuss reconciliation. Moreover, in the aftermath of *The Congo Tribunal,* two ministers were deposed from their official function. Yet, several members of Rau's artistic team were kidnapped, which shows the downside of the enterprise and illustrates that fictitious lawsuits cannot have the same coercive power as law itself. Its political and activist desire always remains unpredictable and difficult to fulfill. However, as argued by Klaas Tindemans, these performances should not be taken for granted. Considering Ben Chikha's *Truth Commission,* he pinpoints one particular moment to be extremely significant:

> The most visible result from *De Waarheidscommissie*, as a process and as an actual performance, is the official apology of the mayor of Ghent, Daniel Termont. It may be criticized as gratuitous gesture, but it also exemplifies an important mechanism in democratic politics. [. . .] If a theatrical performance such as *De Waarheidscommissie*, results in a public apology about an unknown part of history, then this is a plus-value, a result of performative knowledge. [. . .] And a traditional Ph.D. thesis about the same subject would probably not have resulted in the mayor's declaration.[58]

What Tindemans calls a plus-value is the actual performative outcome of a theatrical performance: in this particular case, the public apology from the mayor. However, this is not at all guaranteed for all performances of Ben Chikha's *Truth Commission.* During the Antwerp performance, for example, the right-wing mayor of Antwerp, Bart de Wever, refused to offer an official apology for the colonial *zoos humains*. Again, as Cavallo argues, these pre-enactments remain "non-events" of which their simulated realism is trapped by the manufactured state of anticipation.[59] In this sense, one might ask again what exactly the political stakes are here. Regarding this existential question on the politics of theatre, Christian Biet provides us with an important insight:

> The question of the political in the theatre or of theatre as a political game, designating and depicting the appearance of all before all, does not imply that the theatre only *witnesses*, because, as acting or performance, it has a practical impact; it does something to or in the world thanks to the co-presence of its *apparatus*. Within the aesthetic-political proposal and productions themselves at work, it enacts something pertaining to the process of judgement. Through this process, it thus complicates the data it introduces in an ephemeral presence before and with co-present individuals. In so doing, it brings life to these judgements, gives them a body and flesh that is not a mere image.[60]

Following Biet, theatre is able to set up a powerful meta-narrative. Considering the tribunal genre*,* artists open up possibilities to agitate from within by deliberately appropriating the dramaturgy of the courtroom. Whether artists re-enact previous lawsuits by meticulously copying their structure in a documentary format, or completely deconstruct the rules of law by relying on alternative practices of justice in order to pre-enact non-existing court cases, their artistic interventions can cause individual spectators to think through stubborn judicial systemics. This is endorsed by Avi Feldman:

> The striving for three-dimensional justice in a global world achieved through the reactivation of artistic capabilities via interventions, encounters, and the creation of new institutions, rights, and counter-archives, holds a modest yet noble promise for the future possibility of reinventing democracy and the rule of law and of art.[61]

Therefore, besides Rau and Ben Chikha, a lot of artists are enacting law on stage including Christoph Meierhans, Rebekka de Wit, Anoek Nuyens, Maria Lucia Cruz Correia, Lara Staal, Yoonis Osman Nuur, Jonas Staal, Eva Knibbe, Bart van de Woestijne, among others. Whether the artists address climate change, capitalism, racism, and colonialism or another highly sensitive but influential topic in contemporary society, they all share the need to bridge the boundary between spectator and performance, between law and theatre, and between reality and fiction. Theatrical tribunals are therefore considered thought experiments: speculative, utopian courts that ask critical questions from the part of the spectator on both ethical and moral, as well as political issues. As Nicole Rogers states, this is exactly what might lead them to live up to the political stakes they seek to fulfill:

> Theatrical performances may be pure entertainment; on the other hand, they may galvanize audiences, insult the sovereign, incite disaffection. In documentary theatre, the (re)presentation of legal performances in the specific citational environment of the theatre creates a performance which has been shaped by theatrical conventions into something quite different to the original performance, but which still has its own performative quality. In this sense, the utterances in such theatrical performances are neither 'infelicitous' nor 'hollow'.[62]

In this way, these performances not only contribute to the enlargement of public knowledge of both historical and contemporary acts of injustice, but might also change policy priorities in our society, as they publicly sue the aforementioned violations and crimes. As mentioned earlier, Yasco Horsman states we need law to close a case in the past, but we need art to close the cases that cannot be closed within the legal field itself.[63] In other words, we need theatrical justice to introduce procedures that have not yet been regulated by our current bureaucratic legal system.

Conclusion

As a live event, theatre can be seen as the utmost suitable place to discuss actual topics and heated debates. The ephemeral performing arts are a fleeting medium that comes as close to reality as an artform could possibly come. Therefore, theatre seems to be an appropriate apparatus for dealing with injustices in society. Moreover, transferring the spectacular dramaturgy of the courtroom to the stage seems a considerably useful means of experimenting with the way different communities deal with what drives and influences them. Hence, in this article, I tried to acknowledge the important political opportunities of present-day court case performances. By stressing the courtroom as a place of "covering"—a theatre stage on which law gets enacted—I intended to outline the opportunities for the theatre stage itself to double this specific juridical dramaturgy in order to open up its scope to a wider audience.

As a first, and most obvious strategy, theatrical re-enactments of existing court cases were presented. Following the rich history of theatre, and especially highlighting the approach of twentieth-century dramatists that used documentary strategies to stage

preeminent lawsuits from the past, I argued the re-enacting method was carried on in the twenty-first century. However, artists today no longer wish to copy reality on stage but radically question the premise of objectivity by offering an alternative point of view to the lawsuits depicted. Likewise, the second and most topical strategy that came forward within the confines of this contribution stressed the importance of negotiation and discussion regarding the different topics depicted in the performances. Hence, the pre-enacting principle offered an important strategy to rethink systemic ways of enacting law, and to reflect, instead, upon new imaginaries beyond regular proceedings. Although theatre remains a non-event that never could have the same coercive power to change reality directly, the most important political stake of these pre-enacting lawsuits seems to be their ability to question both the topic discussed within the trial and the courtroom as an apparatus in itself. By rethinking, deconstructing, and reconfigurating the theatrical dramaturgy of the courtroom on stage, a powerful meta-narrative gets installed that can cause individual spectators to think through stubborn systemics within the courtroom in particular and within society in general.

Hence, the official declaration of King Filip of Belgium, expressing his deepest regrets for his country's colonial past in the summer of 2020, is an important step towards the recognition of the horrible fate many Congolese citizens suffered during the reign of King Leopold II. Although Filip I did not officially apologize for his ancestor's cruel acts of violence against the Congolese population, his statement revived public debate on important themes as colonialism, exploitation, and racism. Therefore, it would not be surprising if Chokri Ben Chikha set up a new *Truth Commission* in the near future. This sequel could be a contribution to the fight against police brutality towards people of colour, systemic racism, and the injustices black communities in Belgium and all over the world have had, and still have, to endure. To critically play with the dramaturgy of the courtroom on stage seems a promising way to actually enact law.

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Notes

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On Remembering *Le premier festival culturel panafricain d'Alger 1969*: An Assembled Interview

by Anna Jayne Kimmel | Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT This assembled interview centers both Elaine Mokhtefi and *Le premier festival culturel panafricain d'Alger 1969* (PANAF), a festival which she organized and attended as a part of the Algerian Ministry of Information, noting it as an exemplary instance of the power of performance at the nexus of political ideology, activist history, and the subsequent nostalgia for that era of liberation. It is equally an attempt to overcome a distant relationship to each, reflecting on the potential of oral histories to open up new pathways through the past. This history—of entangled international relations negotiated under the guise of a festive performance, a complicated trajectory of global politics which culminated in a remarkable event of celebration and solidarity—remains understudied, a footnote to more "political" concerns of Third World agendas, decolonial reorderings, and capitalist critiques. Yet through Mokhtefi's testimony, interwoven with searching tendrils of archival detail, we can see that this festival was not a superficial exaltation in extravagance, but a pivotal moment in foreign affairs. More importantly, through her personal history, we can trace the central role that women played in these politics, if often unacknowledged. Edited in 2020, it also counters the pejorative label of non-essential labor applied to most cultural activities during the contemporary pandemic response to COVID-19.

KEYWORDS 1969, Algeria, Elaine Mokhtefi, festivals, memory, Pan-Africanism, performance

At Elaine Mokhtefi's residence along the Hudson in New York City. September 10, 2019.

This assembled interview centers both Elaine Mokhtefi and *Le premier festival culturel panafricain d'Alger 1969* (PANAF), a festival which she organized and attended as a part of the Algerian Ministry of Information, and which was an exemplary instance of the power of performance at the nexus of political ideology, activist history, and the subsequent nostalgia for that era of liberation. The assembed interview is equally an attempt to overcome my distant relationship to each, reflecting on the potential of oral histories to open up new pathways through the past. This history—of entangled international relations negotiated under the guise of a festive performance, a complicated trajectory of global politics which culminated in a remarkable event of celebration and solidarity—remains understudied, a footnote to more "political" concerns of Third World agendas, decolonial re-orderings, and capitalist critiques. Yet through the conviction of Mokhtefi's testimony here, interwoven with my own searching tendrils of archival detail, we can see that this festival was not a superficial exaltation in extravagance, but a pivotal moment in foreign affairs. More importantly, through her personal history, we can trace the central role that women played in these politics, if often unacknowledged. Edited in 2020, this assembled interview also counters the pejorative label of non-essential labor applied to most cultural activities during the contemporary pandemic response to COVID-19.

Elaine Mokhtefi, born 1928 in New York of Jewish heritage, is an author, painter, and activist who, after leaving the United States in 1951 for France, began a career as a translator and journalist and returned to New York to work for the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) from 1960 to 1962. In these years, she traveled to international meetings, developed a strong antiwar and anti-colonial stance, and participated in the 1960 World Assembly of Youth in Accra, where she met and began a collaboration with Frantz Fanon and Mohamed Sahnoun. The reality of the Algerian revolution informed her understanding of international relations; she lived in Algiers from 1962 to 1974, during which time she continued her worked with the FLN and other revolutionaries, including the Black Panther Party. Throughout her career, she would encounter more resistance leaders, including Eldridge Cleaver, Stokely Carmichael, Fidel Castro, Houari Boumédiène, and Ahmed Ben Bella. Moving fluidly between these international spaces, her identity complicated boundaries of race, religion, nationality, and gender commonly associated with lead figures of the time, including the aforementioned individuals. In the archive, her life opens an alternative perspective to the dominantly male and state-sanctioned records of the moment.

While PANAF occurred on the precipice of a total African independence and can be characterized as riding this euphoric wake of liberation, it is perhaps more aptly situated as an attempt towards Africa's inclusion in global history specific to Algerian interest. Through the multinational and multiracial participation of the festival, I argue that PANAF's configuration of pan-Africanism was less exclusively of Black diaspora arts such as at previous festivals, but of the Third World, between capitalism and communism, and all in opposition to European colonialism and Western imperialism. Internationally, 1969 was the height of the nonaligned movement, the emergence of the Third World in the midst of the power play of the Cold War. This movement worked against structuralist logic and bipolar rhetoric of difference to counter East-West dualisms by positing another possibility: the Third World. When the Cold War ended in 1991 and global capitalism and liberalism triumphed internationally, the socialist projects of pan-Africanism and the Third World faded. Yet PANAF occurred within this window of potentiality, when the possibility of global reordering still seemed obtainable.

Animating the space between individual and collective history, memory and utopia, this assembled interview centers not the festival as object of analysis but Mokhtefi's subjectivity, and highlights historical intersubjectivity as the dialogue between Mokhtefi and me remains foregrounded.[1] Luisa Passerini, with her critical work on gender theory and the utopia of the 1968 social movements, invisibly guides my practice of research, listening, and communication, challenging normative relationships between subjectivity and power. By keeping Mokhtefi's words intact and thus highlighting my method, I mark the "sense of fluidity, of unfinishedness, of an inexhaustible work in progress," and accentuate my "experience of encounter" alongside a more traditional reconstruction.[2] With this in mind, I supplement the original transcript between Mokhtefi and me with my own archival research, in order to emphasize where and how knowledge was coproduced rather than co-opted. It is a simultaneous dive into the cultural and political intersections of a performance of the past, exploring the intertextual relationship between history and memory. The goal is to entangle, not conflate, her memory with my research, inserting but not integrating our parallel trains of thought. Rather than relegating the festival to the past, this form extends its narrative life well into the twenty-first century, tracing its reverberations out from Mokhtefi's own memory, reminding myself and the future reader that oral histories tell less about events than their meaning.[3] What follows dually reflects my historical interest in the politics of the festival as rekindled by the nostalgia of its fiftieth

anniversary enthusiasm and Mokhtefi's experience of its original performance, understanding that both are shaped by the context of the present moment.

That Tuesday afternoon was the first and only time I met Mokhtefi, though having read her memoir in advance I felt as though we had already met. Yet in that text I had been surprised by how few words she dedicated to the festival in the memoir given its centrality to my own scholarly work; I wanted her to elaborate those few pages, my desires admittedly contaminating her recount. I offered her hydrangeas upon ringing the doorbell; she offered me sweets in the kitchen, an apt metaphor of the exchange of perishable memories and consumed histories to come in our own "indeterminate encounter" with the past.[4] Before leaving, she would write in the jacket cover of my book: *For whom the past is always present*. There has never been a more perfect epigraph to begin my reading then and mark your reading now.

An Overture

Mokhtefi: It was a unique experience; amazing and unexpected. They attempted to redo it many years later, but nothing like it was at the beginning. Not even the organizers could imagine what it was going to become. It was reality; it really took place.

"It" was *Le premier festival culturel panafricain d'Alger 1969,* since abbreviated as PANAF. On July 21, 1969, precisely fifty summers prior to my interview, the city of Algiers filled with festivity as the organized chaos of celebration flooded the capitol. Streets were barricaded from traffic in preparation for a grand parade. As spectator Nathan Hare documented, "on the first night of the Festival, its streets were filled with multi-colored balloons floating against the background of a gaily illuminated sky, as twenty African countries came through in a parade. Guinea was the most applauded, but there was fellowship and entertainment for all, from Guinean ballet to restrained dancing in the streets."[5] Mokhtefi suggested even more. Nation after nation, each carrying a hand-painted banner with their country's name, paraded through the avenues of old Algiers to the applause and whistles of crowds who lined the streets. Dancers and drummers energized these arteries, filling the space with kinetic bodies and percussive sounds. This parade opened PANAF. In totally, thirty-one state delegations and six liberation movements officially gathered for ten days along the northern shore of Africa to celebrate an African identity in the Arab city known as the "Mecca of Revolutions."[6]

PANAF occurred in the wake of decoloniality. It showed "Africa on the verge of finding at last whatever else is needed."[7] In the euphoric triumph of liberation, "pan-Africanism, as well as Négritude, may with some justice be termed a utopian ideal."[8] Indeed, it is impossible to overlook the euphoric affect which surrounded the festival, both then and now. But rather than to be critical of this utopia in light of the harsher reality and ultimate "failure" of the postcolonial moment, what can be learned from this unique performance of positive energy?[9] What lies beneath the nostalgic celebration of the event? Of equal importance, who contributed to its realization and success? To respond, this interview, which elaborates the history and context of the festival through the memory of Elaine Mokhtefi, crosses media and method, using film, newspapers, photographs, and memoirs; oral history, archival research, and theory. Together, we first address the structure of the event, the recollections of it, and finally allow for contemporary resonances, serendipity and all.

The festival's history admittedly already lives in existing literature, but often as periphery to larger concerns: a trajectory of aesthetic terms from the Négritude movement to Black Power, a chronology of African festivals, or otherwise glossed for the sake of another argument of diasporic solidarities and transnationalism.[10] Few center the festival within an Algerian national history, and fewer, if any, emphasize the predominant role of women in its production, performance, and attendance. To my knowledge, there is not a book singularly devoted to this event, and even Mokhtefi's own memoir offers it only a few pages. For texts that do center the festival, many were produced at the time and thus cannot contextualize its significance within a larger political history as allowed by the retrospection of oral histories, and do not attempt to gesture to contemporary relevance.[11] By accentuating how the festival was deeply rooted in Algerian politics, I argue for the significance outside of an aesthetic or cultural inheritance linked to pan-Africanist ideals. Moreover, by centering Mokhtefi—her testimony itself an invaluable contribution to our understanding of this political moment as she was privy to both American and Algerian leaders—I challenge the primary narrative in which patriarchal authority dominates historical representation. If exemplary, Mokhtefi and the festival alike suggest an alternative narrative of women's rights in the decolonial era with implications for the political value of culture in the twenty-first century.

Act I: Reconstructing the Structure of PANAF

Kimmel: Was PANAF organized by the Organization for African Unity and then hosted by Algeria? Or did the initiative come from the state of Algeria?

Mokhtefi: It was a decision of the OAU. It was the OAU banner. But who organized it? Algeria. Who paid for it? Algeria. I don't know whose idea it was, but maybe it was Algeria's.

The festival was conceived well before its realization in 1969. The intricate labors required to produce such an elaborate event—including the cooperation of international relations, negotiated politics, and economic networks—reveal its logistical accomplishment. PANAF arrived on the heels of Kwame Nkrumah's influential 1963 text *Africa Must Unite* and less than five years after the founding of the *Organization l'union africaine* (then the OAU, now the African Union). Established in 1963 in Addis Ababa, the OAU endeavored to "promote understanding among our peoples and cooperation among our states in response to the aspirations of our peoples for brother-hood and solidarity, in a larger unity transcending ethnic and national differences" including "educational and cultural cooperation".[12] In 1964, at its first session in Kinshasa, the Committee on Education and Culture adopted a resolution to develop cultural activities, such as artistic collaboration via the exchange of artists, expositions, and festivals. At the second convening in Lagos 1966, a resolution was adopted which recommended the organization of "Festivals d'art dramatique et d'artisant africains." By September 11, 1967 in Kinshasa, the kernel of PANAF was planted.[13]

But as Mokhtefi suggested, Algeria was the driving force, first offering to host the event and then acting as the primary curator and administer. One year later, at the next annual meeting of the OAU, the dates and location of PANAF were confirmed for July 21 to August 1, 1969 in Algiers, a symbolic expression of solidarity between Algeria and the OAU.[14] Houari Boumédiène was a key interlocuter. In 1969, Boumédiène served simultaneously as president of Algeria, chairman of the Revolutionary Council, president of the Counsel of Ministries, minister of national defense, president of the OAU, and eventually the fourth

secretary general of the Non-Aligned Movement. His public support and endorsement of the festival lent credibility and authority, as well as clear political leanings, to its realization and positioned PANAF as an event linking all of these concerns.

The history of PANAF reached beyond the founding of the OAU, and must be understood within the specific historical context of Algeria, too. In October 1962, a recently liberated Algeria entered the UN under the leadership of Ahmed Ben Bella. But stability for the new nation was yet to be established, as the Algeria inherited from France was broken, its infrastructure, economy, and market devastated by the Algerian War of Independence, exasperated by the scorched earth policy of the French Organisation de l'armée secrète. In 1965, Ben Bella was overthrown by Boumédiène, both of whom governed via the symbolic value of a one-party state and militant force. Boumédiène would rule until his death in 1978, throughout which he promoted socialist ideals and unity of the Non-Aligned movement. This timeline suggests that, at PANAF, Algeria was still establishing a new national culture which embraced is revolutionary and decolonial status, propagated by the Arabization movement/moment.

Financially, Algeria backed the majority of the festival, with additional monetary support from the OAU and UNESCO. Originally estimated to cost four million dinars—then, nearly four million US dollars—the final invoice was estimated at just under five million US dollars. Algeria provided nearly three million of this total. The festival noted that UNESCO provided ten thousand dollars, though this evidence is not replicated in UNESCO's own budget.[15] Mériem Khellas has astutely linked the robust Algerian financial investment in the festival to the status of the state's fiscal standing, which was largely rooted in hydrocarbon extraction and petrol production. In advance of the festival, from 1963 to 1968, Algeria's petroleum revenue increased six hundred percent, attributed largely to the monopoly company Sonatrach, founded in 1964. The increase of the petroleum revenue paralleled the budgetary growth of the Algerian Ministry of Information and Culture, which administered the festival. With its international economy, this new industry also increased the flow of foreign presence in Algiers, preparing the city for the international texture of the festival.

Kimmel: Were women and children more prevalent at the festival than typical of Algiers of the time?

Mokhtefi: Oh, yes. Women, even veiled women, and children came out. You could not hold them back. It was uncommon for then, very uncommon. They were not used to going out like that. I suppose that most of them had never been to a theater performance in their lives. Here in the street were people performing, and they were there. They were there until two, three, four o'clock in the morning. They were out there, the women. Unbelievable. The festival was amazing on several dimensions, you see. It was amazing because it brought together all those artists from all over Africa from such different cultures and different backgrounds. It was also amazing for what it did for the people of Algiers.

Algeria's postcolonial nationality was formally articulated via the *1963 Code de la nationalité,* granting citizenship only to Muslims.[16] Simultaneously, many Algerians lost French nationality as a result of *statut civil du droit local originaires d'Algérie.* This code also formalized religious and patriarchal hierarchies, as it defined an Algerian as a Muslim person whose father and father's father were also born in Algeria.[17] In 1970, a year after PANAF, this religious requirement was removed, but citizenship remained a patriarchal inheritance.[18] Thus, the strong presence of women in the arts at PANAF—Miriam Makeba

first and foremost but famously also Nina Simone, Assia Djebar, and Elaine Mokhtefi alongside countless others—accentuated a gender divide between arts and politics. The radical revolution leaders and heads of state celebrated at the time were all men.

Thus as a young country still establishing is postcolonial identity (if not economy too), Algeria had specific motivation in volunteering as the host of the festival. As Kathleen Cleaver—an American Black Panther in exile in Algiers at the time of the festival—commented, "A part of Boumédiène's strategy was to promote Algerian leadership at an international level, and one step in his program to bring Algeria into the leadership of Africa, the Arab world, and non-aligned nations, was to host the first Pan-African Cultural Festival."[19] From the beginning of this choice location, pan-African and pan-Arab ideologies were crossed in the festival's choreography that challenged gendered norms.

Kimmel: Were you a part of the organizers?

Mokhtefi: Yes, I was a member; I worked in the office. It was organized by the Ministry of Information, as led by Mohammed Benyahia. He brought me into the ministry for the purpose of organizing the conference. We were old friends. He had been part of the Algerian delegations that came to the US when I was working in the Algerian office for the purpose of influencing the United Nations.

During those delegations, they would remain in New York all throughout the debates. That was often well over a month. He and I became friends, and when the decision was taken that he should be the Algerian organizer of PANAF, he asked me to come work in his ministry. I was one of the rare people in Algeria who spoke English at the time. Also, he had found me efficient during the debates at the United Nations. He knew that he could count on me. So, we organized the festival. I was part of the group that organized it.

Kimmel: In terms of the audience at the festival, was it mainly Algerians, or mainly tourists from Europe?

Mokhtefi: It was mainly local people. They said there were sixty-thousand people. Of course, there were a lot of people who came from abroad. There were a lot of people from the US, even from Brazil, France, the Middle East. They came from all over. It was a unique experience, so the people came. A lot of African-Americans came. When I say a lot, it is all relative, right?

The reach of PANAF extended beyond the continent. For example, Lionnel Enrique, associated with the *théâtre Cubain* troupe *Los-Papines,* "stated he was very interested in this festival which could revalorize the African culture," and spoke more generally of the parallels and influence of African culture on Cuba.[20] The exchange went in both directions; not only did PANAF attract international and intercontinental attention, but PANAF also exported their ideas abroad. Prior to the festival, several writers, including Alioune Diop, traveled as delegates to France to inform Paris of the forthcoming festival, and "the need for Africans to regain full control of their culture," an understandable counter to the French *mission civilisatrice*.[21]

As other scholars have noted, the festival followed the 1966 World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar as headed by Léopold Sédar Senghor, at which Algeria was not officially present. The event at Dakar was considered a celebration of and for the Négritude movement, rather than pan-Africanism, the former an ideology present but not prominent at PANAF. However, I do not mean to reify a binary opposition between these festivals, as Dominique

Malaquais and Cédric Vincent have properly warned against, or replicate existing scholarship on the aesthetic trajectories between the two.[22] Rather, I simply stress that while PANAF came after the festival of Dakar and must be read as an intentional evolution, its motivation was related, but sharply distinct, not least due to the prominent role that Algeria played in the latter. For example, *Negro Digest's* Hoyt Fuller, and audience of both PANAF and the Dakar Festival in 1966, "seemed particularly struck by the contrast in the type of black Americans at the two festivals. Dakar had collected the most well-known artists and entertainers, the Duke Ellington's and others; Algiers had attracted the new breed young militant where those of face, those on the rise, or those yet to begin the making of their names."[23] As such, PANAF was a rally call for an international movement, more so than a reflection on cultural inheritance and shared aesthetics. Contextualized within Algeria's history, it was a strategic political move meant to serve the nation as much, if not more, than the continent and diaspora.

Kimmel: Was there much attendance by sub-Saharan Africa?

Mokhtefi: As participants, yes, but not so much as an audience. But they sent large delegations of artists, dancers, and singers. Government ministers, especially ministers of cultural affairs, came, and there was a symposium alongside the outdoor events. The symposium was in a closed center on cultural affairs. Resolutions were passed, and speeches were made, and so on. That was much less exciting than what was happening in the streets of the city and in the theaters at night . . .

Spatio-politics abounded at the festival, illuminating, intensifying, and at times crossing boundaries between performance and visual culture, state and citizen, local and foreign, modern and traditional. The city committed to material upgrades in preparation for the festival, including illuminating the streets with new cables for lighting,[xxii] expanding the sanitation infrastructure, as well as constructing several temporary hospitals, lodgings, and infirmaries.[24] Live theatres and cinemas were equipped with the latest technology to accommodate the technical needs of the artists. If for the sake of a pan-African festival, Algeria alone benefited from the lasting material investment. The investment in revitalizing the infrastructure of the city paralleled efforts matched only by other internationally acclaimed events such as the World Cup or the Olympics, whose opening ceremonies also mimic the festival's parade of nations. But while the Olympics facilitates a convergence of many nations to compete against one another, PANAF converged differing nations under the common guide of pan-Africanism for a common cause of renewing the strength of the "African personality"—both within and outside of the continent.[25] Competition was thus replaced by cultural performance, winning and losing no longer the spectacle conjoining international concerns.

Clearly politics and culture were entangled throughout the festival, if spatially divided. The symposium, during which the *Pan-African Cultural Manifesto* was drafted, was held at the Palace of Nations and included official delegates from participating nations as well as an informal Russian delegation and representatives from the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, Al Fat'h.[26] Culture was defined at PANAF as "the essential cement of every social group, its primary means of intercommunication and of coming to grips with the outside world: it is its soul, its materialization and its capacity for change".[27] The manifesto concluded with forty recommendations and policy proposals for the sustainable development of cultural activity in Africa. In addition to this cultural arm, the symposium devoted time to science and technology, particularly of atomic energy, nuclear

development and agriculture, as attended by over one hundred twenty delegates and twenty countries.[28]

Yet the separate resonances of the symposium and the opening parade exemplified spatial and political divisions, in spite of claims that culture and politics were equal. The use of the public street during the parade route for the artistic delegates versus the private space of the palace for the political elite highlights the limits of the festival as a cultural event for all. The festival thus revealed the entangled, messy politics of culture, as well as the culture of politics.

Kimmel: Did the Panthers participate or just attend as audience members?

Mokhtefi: They were given a storefront, distributed leaflets and posters, gave talks, and put on films. To that extent, yes, they did partake in the festival. Several of the Panther leaders came from the US with loads of literature and paraphernalia. Eldridge and Kathleen were already there. There was Emory Douglas, the Cultural Minister, David Hilliard, the Executive Director and Raymond Hewitt, the Education Minister. They were the Panthers that were officially there.

They stayed for the whole length of the festival. Their office was in this storefront on the Rue Didouche Mourad, one of the two major streets of Algiers. The Algerian government provided the storefront which had been empty. I don't know who owns it or who owned it; the Algerian government provided it. They set Eldridge and Kathleen—and some of the others, I think David, Emory and Hewitt—up in a hotel, one of the two best hotels in Algiers. They gave the Panthers royal treatment. They were very happy to see them.

So the Panthers were right in the center of the city. It was packed all the time. And outside there were kids and grown-ups always hanging around. I'll show you a picture.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Image-One-Anna-Jayne-Kimmel.jpg>

The Afro-American Cultural Center in Algiers, 1969. Photograph by Robert Wade, used with permission.

The Black Panthers arrived in Algiers in June of 1969, in serendipitous convergence with PANAF alongside African heads of state. Author of *Soul on Fire* and Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver, facing attempted murder charges in the US, fled to Cuba and then sought exile in Algeria, a country which, since independence, had garnered a reputation as a sanctuary for revolutionaries. Stokely Carmichael had previously spent time there in 1967. More members of the Black Panther party would follow and become active participants at the festival with a dedicated space, the Afro-American Cultural Center, or more informally the "Panthers' Lair." This popular storefront was frequented more by young Algerians than Black Americans, forging solidarity around ideological lines of liberation efforts, rather than racial or national affiliation.[29] Mokhtefi connected with the Panthers, forging personal and professional connections with Cleaver, at once noting his charisma but acknowledging his calculated edge. She would be instrumental in founding the international sector of this movement.

The presence of the Panthers in Algeria encourages a parallel reading of the simultaneous histories across the distant geographies of Oakland and Algiers, recognizing both cities as specifically multiethnic and multiracial sites of revolutionary activism.[30] Stokely Carmichael, later Kwame Ture, served as a pivotal interlocuter. An American civil rights activist and global pan-Africanist, he was a leader of the Black Panther party, Black Power founder, affiliate of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and leader of the All-African People's Revolutionary Party, who would attend PANAF and seek refuge in Algiers. In 1969, he married Miriam Makeba, a renowned vocalist from South Africa and performer at PANAF. He worked for and alongside both Ahmed Sékou Touré and Kwame Nkrumah, whose names he later chose to share. His second book, *Stokely Speaks: Black Power Back to Pan-Africanism,* speaks to these ideological entanglements from his individual vantage.

PANAF also occurred in the height of the American Black Arts Movement, a cultural-activist movement of Black pride which spanned the 1960s and 1970s. This movement followed the Harlem Renaissance, and critically responded to the civil rights movements in the US in a manner that, in many ways, echoed the Negritude to pan-African debate. Founded by Amiri Baraka, the Black Arts Movement is associated with values of identity, expression, and liberation. Prominent artists of the movement include Hoyt Fuller, Nathan Hare, and Archie Shepp, all who were present at Algiers in 1969. African American culture more broadly conceived experienced a reciprocity of exchange, as African diaspora outside of the continent returned. As Shepp professed during a festival performance, "Jazz is Black Power. Jazz is African Power," linking the two edifying revolutions across the transatlantic in cultural solidarity.[31] Much of the history of PANAF was recorded by Hare in the first issue of *The Black Scholar,* an American journal of Black studies and research. Hare founded the first Black Studies program in the US at San Francisco State University in 1968, following the strikes the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front. Many universities in the US and worldwide would follow suit. His interconnected history, like that of Mokhtefi's, suggests the need to expand the reading of PANAF from a continental concern to a broader moment of internationalism.

By citing these individuals, I highlight a few of the cultural and political trajectories that this festival strategically intersected, an American front notwithstanding. However, it's necessary to remind ourselves that the plethora of identities present at PANAF did not imply harmony. As Hare wrote, "Algerian leaders today . . . lambasted the ultra-devotion of many black intellectuals to jazz music and black art and other forms of 'folkloric prestige'."[32] Rather, the invitation to a plurality of cultural forms—indeed the Algerian government funded the Panthers throughout their stay in Algiers, including financing their cultural center—implied a solidarity of being that valued difference, rather than requiring homogeneity, in its collective.

Kimmel: How did you feel being a part of that as an American? Or perhaps you weren't regarded as an American?

Mokhtefi: Everyone else saw me as an American. I didn't see myself so much as an American. I felt more like a world citizen. But others saw me as an American. I felt I was doing something. Here was the Vietnam War going on, and the world being divided up between these two superpowers. I had the feeling that I was doing something.

In a moment of civil unrest, as demonstrations sparked protests worldwide including those against Vietnam, PANAF blurred the line between demonstration and festival, as both can be distilled as a public gathering to voice a political opinion. Both were a means of "doing something." Protestors in 1968 France, including recent Algerian immigrants, noted this intersection, writing above the occupied Odéon Theater: "When the National Assembly becomes a bourgeois theater, all the bourgeois theaters should be turned into national assemblies."[33][xxxii] This graffitied slogan established a proximal precedent for the use of theater, and the theatrical, for political protest. PANAF, as both theatrical and national assemblage, was produced by the Algerian government just one year after of the May 1968 riots in France. French student strikes echoed the student protests in the US, following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., particularly in California. Both of these precursor events brought strikes, riots, and occupations into the global public, an embodied politics of gathering that was restaged at PANAF in a new light.

Act II: Recollections of PANAF – Between History and Memory

Kimmel: What would you say was PANAF's greatest success? What memory remains with you most from those 10 days?

Mokhtefi: [A memory that remains] *was meeting Archie Shepp, I suppose. He was amazing. I also became friends with Miriam Makeba. She and I got Nina Simone on stage. Oh, that was very exciting. And then, of course, the Panthers. The Panthers arrived just before the festival. Eldridge Cleaver arrived the end of June, I think it was. They were right on time.*

The primary success was that it took place. It was organized by non-professionals. All of Africa was present. Ideas were exchanged. The standard was high, intellectually and artistically. We felt Africa had come into its own and was taking off. Third worldism was being confirmed. Africa would not be the pawn of international capitalism or cold-war rivalries. For me, personally, it was visionary. It was seeing into the future.

An image I found in the archives allowed me to sense that vision, to feel as though I too were in that crowd, if only for a snapshot moment in history:



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Image-Two-Anna-Jayne-Kimmel.jpg>

Archie Shepp Band performing at PANAF. Photo by Robert Wade, used with permission.

Mokhtefi was not the only independent American present at PANAF to remember Shepp. Robert Wade, a Californian who found himself in Algiers as a graduate student in 1969, documented the festival through the lens of his camera. He was abroad in Europe and North Africa to avoid the US draft for the Vietnam War. The still photographs remain an important documentation of the event, capturing images of the Archie Shepp band onstage with Touareg singers, children outside of the Afro-American Cultural Center, and the famed streets of the Kasbah. These images offer insight into the pedestrian participation and audience demographics, showcasing a heterogenous public in a spectrum of modern and traditional clothing, during day and night, all occupying the avenues and public squares. Moreover, Wade's position as separate from government affiliation offers an additional perspective outside of a motivated, nationalist discourse. His presence suggests the far reach of the co-performance of international events and PANAF's entanglement in many global narratives: of decolonization, post-World War II sentiments, protest movements and civil rights activism, Third World ideology, and Cold War politics. I reflected on the ebullience vibrating within Wade's archive to Mokhtefi, but she had not seen the collection. So we scrolled through images together on her desktop. I believe the images transported her as much as me— one to a place of memory, the other a place of imagination.

In reviewing the daily Algerian newspaper *El Moudjahid,* these juxtaposed stories unfolded within its news coverage, and situated the festival within a politically-charged global history. Such ongoing stories include the American success of the Apollo missions, the atrocities of the Vietnam war, the political turbulence of Nasser's presidency, and the Palestinian conflict. 1969 was also Woodstock and the Stonewall riots; human elation and invention alongside devastation. Native Americans occupied Alcatraz, and students protested US involvement in Vietnam, while people celebrated along Africa's north shore. At the festival, Eldridge Cleaver recognized the overlapping histories which were unfolding, prioritizing the importance of social and liberation movements: "I don't see what benefit mankind will have from two astronauts landing on the moon while people are being murdered in Vietnam and suffering from hunger even in the United States."[34] To reflect on the corresponding times of the moon landing and PANAF while China, the US, and the UAE race towards Mars in the present is to suggest an alternative kind of positive energy and expansive vision of the future, a dream of solidarity and hope contra imperialist ambition that continues into the third decade of the twenty-first century.

Kathleen Cleaver repeated the crossings implicit to PANAF:

> Southern African freedom fighters and veteran guerillas from Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau at war with the Portuguese joined the colorful delegations arriving from all over the vast continent. Algeria, chosen by the Organization of African Unity to host the festival, insisted that liberation from colonial rule was as central to African unity as music.

She added reference to the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya (1952–1960), Kwame Nkrumah's rise to power in Ghana (in office 1952–1966), and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961),emphasizing a collective solidarity around "our battle for self-determination and civil rights."[35] As enthusiasm for the postcolonial moment waned, with economic and political unrest rising in many new nations, 1969 was a pivotal year, itself a festival of events which collectively framed the context in which PANAF was staged such that the greatest success of the event was that "it took place".

Kimmel: Why do you think the first festival was in 1969? Was there a significance to that year? Or was it simply because enough time had passed after liberation?

Mokhtefi: In 1969, Algeria was a leader of what was called then the Third World. There were several international organizations, like the Non-Aligned countries. OPEC had already been founded. This was a time when we really believed there was a Third World, that there could be. There was the East, there was the West, and there was the Third World. China was part of the Third World then; you wouldn't say that today. We really thought the Third World would influence the East and the West; that it was somewhere in between. We really thought that. And then each country's economic problems and political problems came to the fore. Little by little, there was no longer a Third World.

To recall this internationalist potential is central to the PANAF memory. The Third World movement marked its formal origins at the Bandung Conference in 1955, an Afro-Asian gathering of twenty-nine countries representing more than half of the world's population. Associated political leaders with the Third World Movement include Gamal Nasser, Ho Chi Minh, Kwame Nkrumah, Houari Boumédiène, Julius Nyerere, Patrice Lumumba, Sukarno, Michael Manley, Josip Tito, Jawaharlal Nehru, Thomas Sankara, Muammar Gaddafi, and Amílcar Cabral. Many of these names are explicitly linked to PANAF, but all are encapsulated within its larger logic. The festival allows us to understand the Third World not as spatial orientation or geographic division, but social and epistemological movement, an ideology in performative form. That "it took place", which is to say required space, is to suggest that itself was not already a territory, a material location, but an idea, a performative, an ephemerality. As similarly argued by Vijay Prashad, "The Third World was not a place. It was a project. During the seemingly interminable battles against colonialism, the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America dreamed of a new world."[36] More than a decade after Bandung, PANAF extended the afterlife of the conference as it echoed precursory sentiments of the Pan-African Congresses of the early 1900s, finally giving it place.[37]

As gestured toward by Mokhtefi, 1969 also marked the height of Pan-Arabism, the alliance of Arab states spanning parts of North Africa and the Middle East, especially as allied against Western influence. Pan-Arabism gained traction in the early twentieth century with leaders such as Sharif Hussein ibn Ali, and was revitalized in the 1930s in the Arab peninsula by the Arab Ba'ath Party. It was not until the 1950s, under the leadership of Nasser, that Egypt—and by extension North Africa—would strongly join this movement, evidenced by the United Arab Republic (UAR), a political union between Egypt and Syria from 1958 to 1961 in the aftermath of the Suez crisis.[38] Founded in 1960, the Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) may be seen as an economic extension of Pan-Arabism which extends to the broader geography of the Third World. Not of mere coincidence, Algeria joined OPEC in 1969 as its economy flourished. This timing echoes Khellas' acknowledgement of the paralleled histories between hydrocarbon extraction, Algerian state revenue, and the generous funding of PANAF, yet another entanglement that places the arts and cultural affairs alongside economic and political expansive.

But by the end of the 1960s, Pan-Arabism had experienced failure including the collapse of the UAR, the fall of the Arab Federation (between Jordan and Iraq), and end of the United Arab States (between Yemen and UAR).[39] The Arab defeat in the Six-Day War in 1967 punctuated the decline of this movement, just two years before the festival. Nasser, who died in 1970, was replaced by the nationalist Anwar Sadat, ending a period of Pan-Arab momentum. Thus, the Pan-Arab participation of PANAF—including the emphasis of

Arabic as a main language of the festival, its secular nature, attendance by liberation groups such as the PLO, and delegates from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt—can be read as an attempt to grasp onto the lingering possibility of Pan-Arabism on the African continent. In many areas, Pan-Arabism would be replaced by nationalist and Islamic ideologies. Algeria was no exception. Once again, Algeria's own timeline, rather than the festival histories or Pan-African efforts, influenced the reality of PANAF.

By the end of 1969, Algeria faced economic uncertainty as the consolidation of a global market, subsistence economies, exaggerating population growth, and regimes of a single-party state took their toll. Hare recounted that after the opening parade of PANAF, "The next day saw a somewhat different Algiers, and what has been achieved since the revolution, not all of it yet so good. The air of celebration continued, but daylight revealed, in at least one major section, project housing tenements as dilapidated as any in the US. Esso service stations appeared, and Shell, and Hertz, and Pepsi Cola (and company); and the French colonialists slipping back in predatory droves."[40] By returning to PANAF, I do not want to paint a false utopia. Part of the festival was a facade over the existing political and economic weaknesses. It is important, nevertheless, to recover a hope in the archive not yet soiled by a harsher reality of totalitarianism or other cynicism.

(*At this moment, Mokhtefi went to her kitchen desk to retrieve a copy of her book,* Algiers: Third World Capital—Freedom Fighters, Revolutionaries, Black Panthers*, and its French translation.*)

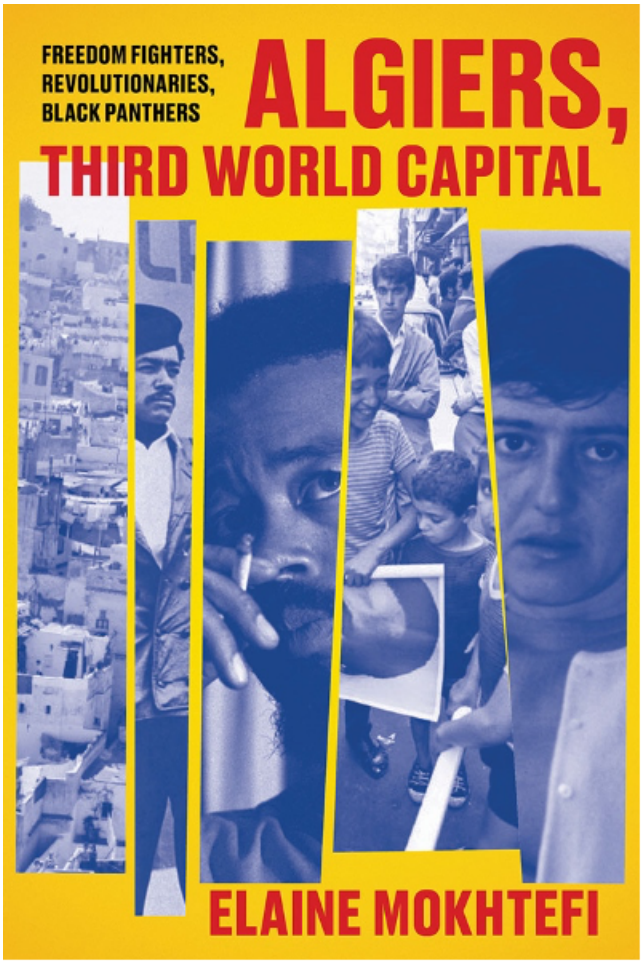
Mokhtefi: This is the French language book. It's given a different title, but it is the same text. They changed the title to Alger, capitale de la révolution: De Fanon aux Black Panthers.

Algiers' reputation as the "Mecca of Revolutions," alluded to in Mokhtefi's memoir, harkens back to Amílcar Cabral, a revolutionist and Pan-Africanist from Guinea-Bissau and leader of the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde), which he founded and led from 1956 until his assassination in 1973. At the festival, he boldly prophesied, "Pick up a pen and take note: the Muslims make the pilgrimage to Mecca, the Christians to the Vatican and the national liberation movements to Algiers!"[41] Not only did his language conjure revolutionary values, but it also conjured literal mobilization, asking the African public to cross geographical and geopolitical terrain in order to animate the festival. His language also evoked a secular stance of anticoloniality by rescripting religious intonations for his liberationist cause. This religious analogy, which was not without its problematics, was echoed by Kathleen Cleaver: "Thus, visiting Algiers became almost a kind of pilgrimage for black revolutionaries in 1969."[42] Here the call to pick up a pen rather than a pistol suggested an alternative to physical violence, complementing a Fanonian logic which had swept the region as the festival presented both.

Furthermore, Frantz Fanon was present in Algiers in the mid-1950s, and was so affected that he chose to be buried in Algeria, in spite of his foreign nationality. Malcolm X (significantly a founding member of the OAU) and Che Guevara both visited in 1964, and Eldridge Cleaver took exile in Algiers (after fleeing to Cuba) in 1969.[43] Nelson Mandela too affirmed the affectation of the revolutionary spirit in Algeria in his autobiography. Mandela wrote, "This situation in Algeria was the closet model to our own, in that the rebels faced a large white settler community that ruled indigenous majority."[44] This list of famed revolutionists constitutes a small sample of those who crossed through Algiers' streets attesting to the origins of the name that motivated Mokhtefi's title. This epithet of the city

was re-popularized, or at least re-stabilized in the archive, by Jeffrey James Byrne's 2016 monograph, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order.*[45]

I had brought a copy of Moktefi's *Algiers, Third World Capital* with me, but she made a point to show me the French translation:



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Image-Three-Anna-Jayne-Kimmel.png>

Elaine Mokhtefi, *Algiers, Third World Capital: Freedom Fighters, Revolutionaries, Black Panthers* (Verso Books, 2018).



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Image-Four-Anna-Jayne-Kimmel.png>

Elaine Mokhtefi, *Alger, capital de la révolution: De Fanon aux Black Panthers* (La fabrique, 2019).

Kimmel: Did you translate the text or have someone translate it for you?

Mokhtefi: The publisher changed it. It was last year, when they got the French text, that they decided they would change the title. They thought this was a better title in French. This was before the demonstrations started in Algeria.

The insertion of Fanon's name into the French title is far from neutral, and points to the mutability of the archive even in linguistic form. The long resistance movement was led by the FLN, an opposition party which succeeded the Algerian People's Party. Famously, Fanon was a leading theorist of liberation, and his justification of violence influenced the party and its militant wing, the National Liberation Army. Fanon's writings were regularly published in *El Moudjahid,* the FLN party paper which also covered PANAF, linking the events and ideologies through a shared archive.[46] As he published, Algeria also found an international voice in literature and theory with the growing attention to francophone authors such as Albert Camus, Jacques Derrida, Assia Djebar, and Malek Alloula, amongst others. Specifically, 1961 saw the French publication of Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre*, which ideologically influenced the revolutionary call of pan-Africanism across the globe. Two years later, the text was circulated in English for an even broader public.

Situated in such close proximity to this moment of intellectual production and resistance (perhaps better phrased as intellectual production *as* resistance), the festival assumed the responsibility, intentionally or not, of allowing these political ideologies to come into discourse with one another, facilitated by the peaceful guise of culture. Indeed, Djebar and Alloula would coauthor a play for PANAF. Both the streets of Algiers and the spread of the paper were spaces for such negotiation throughout the festival.

Mokhtefi: In France, the book has had tremendous success, much more than here. It's important to understand that the Algerian War is a dark spot on French history. So they skip over it. I'm really surprised, really surprised, that this book is taking off. I'm not an intellectual, I'm not a university professor, I have not even graduated from college. But I was there and the book has taken off. It really has. I'm just totally surprised, amazed, and happy.

France had not officially recognized the use of torture during the Algerian War for Independence until Macron issued a public and official apology in 2018. Until 2005, French schools were required to teach positive aspects of colonialism: an intentional mis-memory, an attempt to disavow history into the past. From the 2005 dissent, a learning module was added on the memories of the Algerian War.[47] As the popularity of Mokhtefi's memoir indicates, PANAF allows for an accessible, if tangential, discussion of this history as it addresses the residual legacy of colonialism without implicating a singular government. Even as Mokhtefi downplayed her role—be it personal humility or structural gender subordination—her lasting impact on French-Algerian history is self-evident.

Act III: Remembering Now

Kimmel: I know that the festival was repeated in 2009 as a fortieth anniversary performance, if with less pomp and circumstance. Why do you think it wasn't as successful in recent times?

Mokhtefi: Yes, there was a repeat performance. I wasn't there, though Kathleen Cleaver was. She had no basis of comparison though, because although she was in Algeria during the PANAF, she was having a baby at the time. What she told me was it was pretty good, but from what I have read, it had nothing of the strength, of the participation, of the surprise and enjoyment of the first festival. It's like Woodstock; you can't repeat those things.

I saw recently a film has come out done by an Algerian, which you can get on YouTube. I'll show you afterwards. It's a bit about the festival. Also, there's a short film on the festival, not the Klein film. Klein's film is very visible. It's very visible for people to study, but not as an entertainment—for that, it was a flop. But there is also a short film on the festival. Have you seen the short film? In fact, Archie and I are in it. I'll show you. And then there's this film that just recently came out, maybe last year or maybe or the beginning of this year. It's very recent.

As Mokhtefi noted, the primary footage of this festival comes from William Klein's documentary film, *The Pan-African Festival of Algiers*, which was commissioned and funded by Algerian officials to promote its foreign policy "in solidarity with the liberation movements" across all of the African continent, not just the north, as well as Cuba and Vietnam.[48] Klein's documentary footage of PANAF provides unparalleled video access to

the festival, including on and off-stage moments from several performances, the opening parade, highlights from the symposium, and private conversations in dressing rooms.[49] A 2010 republication by *Arte Editions* includes a multimedia handout, with contemporary reflections written by Klein, Kathleen Cleaver, and acclaimed Algerian author Rachid Boudjedra, among other voices, and has been screened with renewed vigor in recent years across Paris and France as the festival received attention on account of the anniversary. These reflections collectively gesture beyond the festival, to events such as Woodstock, leaders such as Nelson Mandela, and violences elsewhere, including Vietnam, allowing the reader to understand how a variety of participants in the festival contextualized PANAF amidst the specific historical moment.

This republication opens toward an establishment of nostalgia which so often surrounds moments of celebration. In the fiftieth anniversary of PANAF and 1969, during which I conducted this interview, there was heightened attention to PANAF more broadly, including a conference at Johns Hopkins University, "Paris/Algiers 1969: Declarations of Freedom by the Black American Avant-Garde," at which both Elaine Mokhtefi and Archie Shepp were present. Much of the (still limited) archival work surrounding PANAF, such as Khellas' text, was completed in 2009 in its fortieth anniversary performance. At risk of teetering into the speculative, what is the significance of the half-century, and why does it raise a collective nostalgia? How would this interview be different it if it was conducted in 2018 or 2020, close to but not during the height of PANAF's remembrance? In short, why does it take an anniversary to remember?

Kimmel: Do you think you'll go back to Algeria?

Mokhtefi: I did go back. I went back for about three weeks last year. And I'm going back again; this time now I'm invited. Every year they have what's called the Salon international du livre d'Alger. *It is a book fair, an enormous book fair. So I have been invited. After being banned. In fact, yesterday, we agreed on what day I would be arriving, what day I would be speaking, and so on. Unbelievable. I'll go back towards the end of October. It's amazing.*

I am lucky, I can say, because my husband was Algerian. So they finally gave me a visa. And once they gave me the visa, then I can return. For forty-four years I didn't go; I wasn't able to go.

There is an uncanny repetition to Mokhtefi's experience of having been deported from Algeria in 1974 and banned from return under political circumstances, and my own experience as an American, female researcher—if our positions and expertise are strikingly different. In 2019, after receiving a generous research grant, my own visa application for Algeria was denied. I was once again reminded of my own exteriority to this history, dislocated in both time and space. I was reminded of the further impossibility of ever fully crossing that fissure, in spite of the memory and memorabilia of the festival which exist in the archive, interviews, and images. This gap continues to trouble me today, and underscores my desire to keep separate Mokhtefi's memory from my research in the printing of this interview. Sometimes we aren't meant to (time) travel.

Kimmel: I'm curious about your recent experience there, particularly if you felt things had changed?

Mokhtefi: It's changed so much that I didn't recognize it. The city of Algiers, everything has changed. The country, everything. Everything changed. When I went to live there in 1962, there were nine million Algerians. Today there are over forty million. They are well on

their way to fifty million. The growth has changed the country considerably. We were able to be idealistic. Our first preoccupations, our first concerns, were not about economics. They were about freedom and justice, whereas now the first is economics with political problems often take the backseat. It's a very different world. At some point Algeria and Third World did not exist anymore. At some point, Algeria was concerned with its economic problems and the political problems that came out of those economic problems. They had a ten-year civil war. The country has changed. Now, since the February 22, since I was there at the end of 2018, there are demonstrations. Practically continual demonstrations every Friday and every Tuesday: every Friday everyone comes out and demonstrates. Every Tuesday, the students. What are they demonstrating for? They're demonstrating for more justice. It's a very difficult situation. The army has held off up till now. Let's hope that the army continues to hold off.

Writing from the interstitial moment again allows us to document hope. On February 22, 2019, public demonstrations began in Algeria to protest the high levels of unemployment, corruption, and austere authority, first calling for then-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika to not pursue a fifth term and then calling for all affiliated political members and militant leaders to also step down. Bouteflika had been in power since 1999, but had not been seen in public since a stroke in 2013. Many sites of these protests were previously host to the festival, echoed scenes of bodies in public space for political visibility.

In April 2019, Bouteflika resigned as a consequence of continued protest and political unrest, with Abdelkader Bensalah stepping in as interim president. An election, originally scheduled for July was postponed indefinitely due to too few viable candidates.[50] Tens of thousands continued to march in opposition. Eventually these street protests movements, known as the *Hirak*, grew to weekly demonstrations of hundreds of thousands in Algiers and millions across the nation, eventually with solidarity marches worldwide. Arrests proliferated during this time. Yet unlike the Arab Spring and other precedents of revolution and social movements, the *Hirak* radically disavowed the use of violence.

The final vote was held after my interview with Mokhtefi, in December 2019, between five candidates: former Prime Ministers Abdelmadjid Tebbourne and Ali Benflis, former Culture Minister Azzedine Mihoubi, former Tourism Minister Abdelkader Bengrine and Abdelaziz Belaid, head of the El Mostakbal Movement party.[51] On December 12, Abdelmadjid Tebbourne was elected, a close affiliate with the military. After forty-two consecutive weeks of protest, demonstration, and policing, the result did little to calm the nation's tensions. Protests continued the following day, and the streets remained animated, as if the festival's energy lived on with new cause.

Kimmel: Do you have nostalgia for that time period? Or is it simply in your past?

Mokhtefi: With my husband being Algerian, we talked about Algeria all the time. We followed all the news out of Algeria. I felt a tremendous nostalgia, and he did too. But he was an army veteran, a Liberation Army veteran. He was also the first president of the National Student Association after independence. He was close to politics. He felt it had become the kind of country that he did not want to live in. We were all continually waiting for the day that things changed, but they just got worse instead of changing for the better. Finally, it was civil war. So now, there seems to be a tremendous wake up, a second revolution. People are out there striving for something better. Enough people are saying, 'I'm not afraid.' So maybe it will come off. At least, I feel sure that whatever comes out of all this, it will be better.

There was a desire for justice [at PANAF]. All of these people who came were bursting. They had all known colonialism, all of those countries, all of those liberation movements. They had all known colonialism. And what a difference with freedom. What a difference.

It's not to say that people who have been through colonialism are not to some extent narrow minded, racist, capitalistic, or imperialistic. But it is to say that they share something very human. I felt that all through that festival, this humanity. And I think all of the African Americans who came also felt it really strongly. All of poets, the writers, and the musicians; they all felt it very strongly. I know that Archie did.

During PANAF, Assia Djebar debuted her first and only play, *Rouge l'aube,* co-authored with her then-husband Walid Garn. The script ends with the directive, "The collective song stops."[52] Has the song of PANAF stopped singing, too? Can interviews such as this do anything to keep it alive? Or is nostalgia for a joy of the past meant to fade in history, so that new moments of performance, protest, and solidarity can take its place?

The constant entanglement of culture and politics defined the festival as more than entertainment or celebration, lifting the festival out of an exclusively artistic trajectory and certainly above the label of non-essential. Revisited in a time when in-person interviews, let alone multinational festivals, seem the antithesis of commonplace, its performance evidenced not a fear of togetherness and proximity, but an investment in its very possibility. Adding to existing knowledge of the festival, Mokhtefi's life centers the significant role of women at the time and recenters Algerian national history as critical to the understanding of PANAF. Crystalized as testimony, Mokhtefi's reflection defined "the terms of the cluster of ideas that lies at the center of this collection" and, paired with archival research, underscored an interwoven history coalesced for a single moment.[53]

If oral histories are a record of the past, the coproduction of this assemblage of information reveals that such testimony not only records the past but shifts the present, altering how and what we chose to study. The converging and diverging paths of this interview reveal oral history as a live performance of knowledge production, rather than a record of a history fully past. Thus, this interview is neither biography nor history, at least neither purely. Rather, it is an attempt at permitting and valuing the intersecting, "indeterminate encounter" of historical research, revealing the productive tension between the autonomy of memory and the coauthorship of recollection, a reminder that through our collective memory, *the past is always present*.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. Playing upon the expanded field of assemblage, identified by Bill Brown as the expansive set of encounters which develop from "catalyzing an oscillation between material specificity and conceptual abstraction," this interview plays with memory as an encyclopedia of references to reveal its multiplicity, even if from a singular individual. Bill Brown, "Re-Assemblage (Theory,

Practice, Mode)," *Critical Inquiry* 2 (2020): 262. See also Luisa Passerini, *Memory and Utopia: The Primacy of Intersubjectivity* (London: Equinox, 2007).

2. Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), vii. Ironically, Portelli cites 1969 as the pivotal year in his life—intellectually and personally.

3. Portelli, *Death of Luigi Trastulli,* iii. A robust archival project interlacing four festivals, the PANAFEST Archive also features oral histories, witnessing, and interviews, a "mindmap" of the correlated histories, including Elaine Mokhtefi's. Yet in the sonic web of the past, her unique voice is overshadowed by a web of male actors. PANAFEST Archive, CNRS, 2020, http://webdocs-sciences-sociales.science/panafest/.

4. Anna Tsing reminds us that "to listen to and tell a rush of stories is a method. And why not make the strong claim and call it a science, an addition to knowledge? Its research object is contaminated diversity; its unit of analysis is the indeterminate encounter." Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 37.

5. Nathan Hare, "A Report on The Pan-African Cultural Festival," *Black Scholar* 1, no. 1 (1969): 3–4.

6. The thirty-one countries participating in the festival were Algeria, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Côte-d'Ivoire, Dahomey, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinee, Guinee-Bissao, Iles du Cap Vert, Ile-Maurice, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, République Centrafricaine, Senegal, Somalia, Soudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), and Zimbabwe.

7. Hare, "A Report," 10.

8. Bentley Le Baron, "Négritude: A Pan-African Ideal?" *Ethics* 76, no. 4 (1966): 269.

9. See David Boucher's critique as well as the novels of V. S. Naipaul for examples of decolonial failures. Boucher, D. (2019), "Reclaiming history: dehumanization and the failure of decolonization", International Journal of Social Economics, Vol. 46 No. 11, pp. 1250–1263.

10. On aesthetic terms, see Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris: the African Writers' Landscape* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); P. Tolan Szkilnik, "Flickering Fault Lines: The 1969 Pan-African Festival of Algiers and the Struggle for a Unified Africa," *Monde(s)* 1, no. 1 (2016): 167–184. On the chronology of festivals, see Samuel D. Anderson, "'Negritude Is Dead': Performing the African Revolution at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival (Algiers, 1969)," in *The First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar 1966: Contexts and Legacies*, ed. David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016); *Dakar 66: Chronicles of a Pan-African Festival*, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, February 16–May 15, 2016. On solidarities, see Meghelli, Samir, "From Harlem to Algiers: Transnational Solidarities Between the African American Freedom Movement and Algeria, 1962–1978," in *Black Routes to Islam*, ed. Manning Marable and Hishaam Aidi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

11. Hare, "A Report"; William Klein and Antoine Bonfanti, *Festival Panafricain D'alger: Film Culte Et Méconnu!; Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther*, France: Arte Editions, 2010; Portelli, *Death of Luigi Trastulli*.

12. Organization of African Unity (OAU), *Charter of the Organization of African Unity*, May 25, 1963, accessed *https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7759-file- <* https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7759-file-> *oau_charter_1963.pdf.*

13. Organization of African Unity, "News bulletin", *All-African Cultural Festival* (1969), 8.

14. "Panafrican Cultural Manifesto", *All-African Cultural Festival* (Addis Ababa: Press & Information Division, OAU General Secretariat, 1969), 9.

15. Mériem Khellas, *Le Premier Festival Culturel Panafricain: Alger, 1969: Une Grande Messe Populaire* (Paris: Harmattan, 2014), 40–41.

16. Algerian Nationality Code, Law No. 63-69, section 34 (1963).

17. Bronwen Manby, "4:3: French Territoires," in *Citizenship in Africa: The Law of Belonging* (Oxford: Hart, 2018), 65.

18. Nationality Law, Law No. 1970-86, (1970), www.refworld.org/cgibin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=5b8fa1ba4.

19. Kathleen Cleaver, "Back to Africa: The Evolution of the International Section of the Black Panther Party," in *The Black Panther Party (reconsidered)*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 218.

20. *El Moudjahid.* Algiers, Algeria: Entreprise national de presse, May 13, 1969.

21. *El Moudjahid.*

22. Dominique Malaquais and Cédric Vincent, "Entangled Panafrica: Four Festivals and an Archive," mezosfera.org < http://mezosfera.org> , May 2018, http://mezosfera.org/entangled-panafrica/#fn-8114002 < http://mezosfera.org/entangled-panafrica/#fn-8114002> .

23. Hare, "A Report," 3.

24. *El Moudjahid.* Algiers, Algeria: Entreprise national de presse, July 13–14, 1969.

25. Le Baron, "Négritude," 273.

26. Hare, "A Report," 5.

27. "Panafrican Cultural Manifesto."

28. Hare, "A Report," 5.

29. Hare, "A Report," 6.

30. For more on this cross-connection, see Marie-Pierre Ulloa, *Le nouveau rêve américain: du Maghreb à la Californie* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2019).

31. "Archie Shepp, We Have Come Back Festival Panafricain d'Alger en juillet 1969," www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GQKwcKSLOU.

32. Hare, "A Report," 4.

33. Ian Birchall, "France 1968," in *Revolutionary Rehearsals*, ed. Colin Barker (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2002), 23.

34. Kathleen Cleaver, "Art and Revolution: Black Power at the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival," *Truthout*, September 29, 2016, https://truthout.org/articles/art-and-revolution/.

35. Cleaver, "Art and Revolution."

36. Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: New Press, 2007), xi.

37. Michael Adas, "Contested Hegemonies," *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, ed. Christopher Lee (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 96.

38. See A. I. Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

39. There are two notable unifications which persist in the twenty-first century: the unification of seven emirates as the United Arab Emirates, and the unification of North and South Yemen to form Yemen. The Ba'ath party also continues today in the Syrian region, promoting Pan-Arabism.

40. Hare, "A Report," 3.

41. Olivier Hadouchi, "'African Culture Will Be Revolutionary or Will Not Be': William Klein's Film of the First Pan-African Festival of Algiers (1969)," *THIRD TEXT-LONDON*- 1 (2011): 117.

42. Cleaver, "Art and Revolution."

43. Khellas, *Le Premier Festival Culturel Panafricain*, 30.

44. Nelson Mandela, *The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (London: Abacus, 1995), 355.

45. Jeffrey James Byrn, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

46. Many of these articles, originally published anonymously in *El Moudjahid*, would be collected in the posthumously printed book, *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays by Frantz Fanon* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

47. "Histoire Terminale Série S," *ÉduSCOL*, Ministère Éducation Nationale, 2014. https://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/lycee/12/3/01_RESS_LYC_HIST_TermS_th1_309123.pdf.

48. Hadouchi, "African Culture," 117.

49. Other footage, if less frequently cited, certainly exists, such as Théo Robichet, *Alger '69* (1971, Paul Thiltges Distributions, Luxembourg, and La Bascule, France, 2008), 16 minutes.

50. "Algeria Presidential Election: Five Candidates Announced," *Algeria News | Al Jazeera*, November 2019, www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/algeria-presidential-election-candidates-announced-191103064535822.html.

51. "Algeria Presidential Election."

52. Assia Djebar and Walid Garn, *Rouge l'Aube—pièce en 4 actes et 10 tableaux* (Alger: SNED, 1969), 102.

53. Passerini, *Memory and Utopia*, 8.

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Introduction: Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa

by Rayya El Zein | Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA), Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT In recent years, scholars in the fields of cultural studies, American studies, history, ethnic studies, and Middle East area studies have approached questions of race and racism in this geographic region with renewed critical vigor. Recent work deconstructing anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia in the Americas and Europe has put these patterns of discrimination into intersectional conversation with anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism. New historical efforts have drawn attention to the legacies of slavery in the Ottoman, Persian, and Arab Empires, working to understand how forms of racialization and racial hierarchization predated and were exacerbated by the arrival of European imperial forces. At the same time, activists in the region draw attention to prevailing racism against migrant laborers, marginalized indigenous populations, and others as the afterlives of colonialism, war, austerity, and revolution carry on. Together, this academic and activist work asks for attention by leaders, community members, and scholars of this region to the particularities of racecraft in the region: How are "Blackness" and "whiteness" constructed in the Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish speaking worlds? What are the obstacles to discussing and identifying race particular to the histories of this region, its peoples, and its histories? This forum uses close readings of popular culture and political discourse across the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA) in pursuit of these questions and others.

KEYWORDS anti-Blackness, area studies, cultural studies, MENA, Middle East, North Africa, race, racialization, racism, Southwest Asia, SWANA

I come to this forum as someone learning about race and racialization in places I call home. Specifically, I come to the job of soliciting and editing the pieces in this forum Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA)[1] as part of a process of interrogating white supremacy and anti-Black racism between the United States and the Arab Levant.[2] Some of the authors of forum entries have been researching and writing about race in the region for some time; some are newer to these conversations. Most of us speak the languages relevant to our research contexts and/or have spent significant time in residence there. Many of us identify as POC, but most do not identify as Black. I begin with this foregrounding of authorial subject positions because, as historian and Africana scholar Eve Troutt Powell put it recently, "nobody comes to these discussions cold."[3] That is, for all of us writing, and likely for many reading, personal experiences brought us to these questions and intimate attachments keep us asking them.

The pieces collected in this forum were written and edited during a period when the shape and impact of anti-Black racism in the MENA/SWANA and its diasporas appeared to regain poignancy in the wake of current events.[4] The murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis

police officers in May of 2020 cast a spotlight on the role of Arab clerks and corner store owners as unfortunate intermediaries between Black communities and police departments in the United States. This attention summoned a renewed, if brief, investigation of anti-Black racism within Arab-American and other hyphenated communities from the MENA/SWANA.[5] Meanwhile, in the Arab world, in Lebanon for example, waves of protest for structural change have belatedly also included calls to address patterns and structures of racism. Protests against the deplorable *kafala*, or sponsorship system, have been growing in recent years, including during the so-called October Revolution (2019) against corruption and the sectarian regime.[6] The global pandemic continues to reveal the cruelty of that system in which employers wield incredible power over the lives of migrant workers —many of them female domestic workers residing in the homes of their employers and at the whim of their discretion about any number of considerations from what and how much they eat, to access to travel documents, to pay.

However, many MENA/SWANA contexts have also seen the appropriation of the "Black Lives Matter" slogan during protests staged for an international audience that do not center the rights or concerns of Black community members. Turkish students fearing contagion during the COVID-19 pandemic used the hashtag #TurkishStudentLivesMatter to petition against procedures for end of year exams. Iranian activists have used the slogan #IranianLivesMatter to draw attention to a number of individual cases of police brutality and capital punishment in addition to the US-led blockade of the country. In Lebanon and Palestine, pushback against the use of "Lebanese Lives Matter"[7] and "Palestinian Lives Matter"[8] slogans—and the continued demand to recognize the existence of Afro-Arabs—asks Arab activists who are white-passing to deepen the anti-racist work in their organizing. Celebrations of and enthusiasm about music, fashion, and other cultural production read as "Black" attempts to focus emphasis away from anti-Black racism, colorism, and white supremacy as it exists in all of these contexts.[9] The appropriations of the Black Lives Matter slogan must be read together with histories of radical, intersectional struggle *and* alongside other appropriations of Black culture and affect in the region.

Over the past decade, thinkers and activists of different subject positions have sought to excavate and reconstruct histories and practices of solidarity between (largely) US Black communities and activists and different politicized communities in the MENA.[10] Most prominent here has of course been the question of solidarity between (again largely) African-Americans under a Jim Crow and Jim Crow-descended US prison system and Palestinians under Israeli Occupation. I have followed this work with great personal and political interest but I confess to finding the conclusions sometimes out of joint. Examinations of the intersections of the Israeli and US carceral states or military industrial projects and comparative analyses of settler colonial states are surely helping to grow international awareness of the situation in Palestine. But are they helping Palestinians undo white supremacy in our own communities? Does the excitement about interracial solidarity reveal a hesitancy to ask difficult questions about race-based discrimination? How can these be reconciled?

This forum is imagined as a tool to deepen the ongoing work of recognizing, naming, and undoing white supremacy, colorism, and anti-Black racism in the MENA/SWANA. The entries take up the call by Afro-Iranians, Afro-Arabs, Afro-Turks to identify and root out everyday racism and colorism perceived to be harmless.[11] The forum begins from the recognition that many non-Black MENA/SWANA communities, grappling as they are with the historical legacies of European colonial violence and neo-imperialism in the shape of the global war on terror, have struggled to also recognize the local and regional lineages of

empire and colonialism that continue to dispossess and discriminate racially in this region. Forum entries draw their strength from intimate familiarity with and connections to these communities and began with the premise that before staking claims to solidarity, more work needs to be done by the non-Black members of our communities to rise to the call of our Black neighbors, classmates, colleagues, family members to identify, recognize, and undo practices of racialization, colorism, and other race-based discrimination.



Palestinian actress Maryam Abu Khaled's Instagram video addressing "casual" anti-Black racism in Arabic went viral in June of 2020

For example, several of the pieces in this forum refer to or critically examine blackface performances (Baghoolizadeh, Vaziri, Willoughby). In richly mediated entries on Iranian theatre, film, comics, and Turkish television commercials, the authors gesture towards the intermedial (between for example film and comics) and intercultural ways (between for example Turkey and the US) in which these practices cohere. That is, besides discussing various aspects of these nefarious representations, the entries in this forum also attempt to explore how they work. This deepens a discussion of race and racism beyond a critical identification and reproach of racist ephemera and into the realm of cultural racecraft—what these representations do and how they resonate, elide, and endure.

In addition, several of the pieces in this forum are in direct conversation with or propose their own radical treatments of inter-ethnic and interracial discourse, allyship, and critique (Burris, Crasnow, Davis, Nickell and Benkato, Sprengel and Silverstein). The frameworks they excavate however, rarely champion a formed, determined solidarity. Rather, these authors *critique* what they see as normative frameworks of solidarity, multicultural discourse, tolerance, and transnational "wokeness" in order to tease out how the

production of liberalism as development, as multiculturalism, as feminism, and as leftism can work hand in hand with modulations of white supremacy.

This forum asks what particular textures cohere around whiteness, indigeneity, Arabness, Iranianness, Israeliness, Turkishness, and anti-Black racism in the MENA/SWANA? What are the economic and geopolitical histories and cultural and media lineages that inflect this racism? What histories of slavery and empire specific to the region must be rendered familiar in order to recognize and unravel textures of anti-Black racism in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Hebrew-speaking contexts? Finally, how can this analysis, drawn from intimate knowledge of the history of the SWANA, its languages, cultural production, and accompanying structures of feeling be used to deepen and complexify a global struggle against white supremacy and anti-Black discrimination, dispossession, and oppression?

Approaching Race and Racism in the MENA/SWANA

For decades, a common retort within MENA/SWANA studies and among MENA/SWANA communities has been that racism as it is understood in the US context is not applicable in this region. This argument goes that the realities of the transatlantic slave trade, the lineages of racism descended from it, and thus the theoretical and political frameworks developed around race in the US are not applicable to the MENA/SWANA region, where the transatlantic slave trade did not reach. These defensive protestations frequently point to the brutality of American plantation slavery in a distancing mechanism that qualifies as lesser any discrimination darker-skinned individuals may face in the MENA/SWANA. Yet, Black communities in the region and Black scholars working on race-based discrimination, histories of slavery, and contemporary legal and labor codes have protested the silencing and erasures enacted by these defensive postures from non-Black speakers. Important as it is to provincialize US empire, and with it, patterns of racialization born of that context, accusations of US-centrism—since they frequently silence an often Black speaker—have largely suppressed anti-racist critiques in MENA/SWANA contexts. That is, accusations of US-centrism have largely not encouraged the proliferation of other work on race, slavery, colorism, and empire that would facilitate a non-US-centric conversation about and struggle against anti-Black racism in MENA/SWANA contexts. Thanks to the efforts of Black activists and scholars, this does appear to be changing, albeit slowly. Recent months have seen some public efforts in MENA/SWANA academic communities of addressing these erasures.[12]

At the same time, the terrifying global advance of the so-called war on terror since 2001 has proliferated racializations of Arab and Muslim bodies. These have produced a matrix of representations of the racially abject that are at a remove from racialized Blackness while not disconnected from it (see Davis and Crasnow in this forum).[13] More complicated, brown and Muslim bodies rendered abject by US empire have found themselves at the violent whims of a "post"-racial multicultural liberalism (see Sprengel and Silverstein in this forum). While the most spectacular example finds itself in the drone warfare of former US president Barack Obama, college campuses across the country have found themselves bifurcated by race and class around the question of US military involvement in the MENA/SWANA. In 2013, when ROTC recruiting was then being reconsidered for reinstatement at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn after a forty-year hiatus, I saw in my

own classrooms how the tools available for discussing racism in these communities frequently falls short.[14] During the town hall on the question of whether the ROTC should resume recruiting at the college serving the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Crown Heights, the racial animus grew audibly between working-class Black students, promised opportunity and tuition-free education through the ROTC program, and first- and second-generation Iraqi and Afghani students, who acutely felt the threat to people and places close to home manifest through that expansion of the military industrial complex. This animus cannot be explained by gestures towards an ancient and essentialized anti-Blackness, somehow intrinsic to the region, to its politics, or to Islam.[15] Similarly, pointing solely to the reality of US imperial intervention masks other histories and power struggles that, while they cannot trump US power or other Western intervention, are no less nefariously implicated by the racialized hierarchies of white supremacy, even when they are manifest in communities of color.

Some iteration of these points and dynamics can be recognized in almost any discussion of race and racism in the MENA/SWANA. Is there a way around these affective and discursive pillars—neither defeatist nor triumphant—towards new conversations about race-making and racialization in the MENA/SWANA? One goal of the forum is to do just this. The forum collects short pieces that focus in on one aspect of racecraft as it is manifested across a mini-archive of cultural ephemera. These analyses testify to some of the myriad practices of race-making in everyday life. Read together, they offer different entry points to conversations of race and racecraft in the MENA/SWANA.

Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the MENA/SWANA

The scope of this forum is bracketed in specific ways. By focusing on cultural constructions of race and racism, the forum draws attention to the way race-making works in popular culture. Analyses of film, theatre, dance, music-making, and comics draw out some of the images, sounds, and aesthetics of racemaking in specific contexts. At the same time, the nine authors of the forum also analyze how practices of racialization signaled by these cultural forms cohere in regional and transnational flows of power and legibility. The forum elaborates a wide-ranging and occasionally unwieldy conversation about the particularities of race-making in historical and geographical contexts that are not tethered to the transatlantic slave trade and its legacies. In the place of those world-ripping lineages, authors point to local and regional referents that construct and have constructed racecraft and racism in this region.

As such, the forum makes a modest but specific contribution to an already substantial body of scholarly and activist work on Blackness, whiteness, and indigeneity in the MENA/SWANA (see Tayeb < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/whiteness-in-north-africa-tayeb/> in this forum). In closely reading pieces of visual and sound media and events, the forum collects an archive of material through which to recognize and dissect contemporary workings of racecraft in the region. This collection of discomfiting and upsetting material demands to be reckoned with—not as remnants of a foregone era, nor as imports from the US or the "West"—but as evidence of contemporary, homegrown patterns of racialized associations, dispossessions, and disappearances. At the same time,

neither is the forum a haphazard collection of racist ephemera. Across the forum, close readings of popular culture draw out, to borrow from Jemima Pierre, "the construction, constitution, and maintenance of racial categories and meanings—the processes of racialization."[16] Entries lean on selected media to illustrate selected practices of race-making.

These entries draw on certain lineages of scholarly research. The forum's closing entry, "What Is Whiteness in North Africa?" sketches these out as an expanded invitation to further reading. A few of these threads are mentioned here in order to help ground and position the forum interdisciplinarity between cultural studies and MENA/SWANA area studies. Major advances by MENA historians Eve Troutt Powell, Chouki El-Hamel, Ehud Toledano, Mathew S. Hopper, and Sussan Babaie, among others have made specific the particular contours of slavery specific to the region.[17] These works have foregrounded that understanding anti-Black racism in the region requires attention to the histories of slavery, indebtedness, confinement, and the overlapping colonial geographies lived in the MENA/SWANA.[18] Many of the forum's entries reference this literature. Indeed, that they do so gestures to how a cultural studies of the MENA/SWANA might benefit from similarly foregrounding these works. Besides this historical work, key studies of cultural production by Cynthia Becker, Richard C. Jankowsky, Ella Shohat, Ammiel Alcalay, Ida Meftahi, and Pedram Partovi from the disciplines of art, anthropology, literature, ethnomusicology, dance, and film have connected historical and contemporary contexts in important ways.[19] Authors in this forum additionally draw on regional analyses of nationalism;[20] anthropological treatments of identity;[21] and work addressing the racialization of Jews and Muslims in the US and Europe.[22] All of these further flesh out a corpus of cultural studies of the MENA/SWANA critically attuned to questions of racecraft.

Important for the elaboration of the cross section between cultural studies and MENA/SWANA studies that I attempt here, authors are not limited citationally to scholarship on the region. They draw from literature that analyzes race and meaning making in other contexts as well. As gestured to above, entries in the forum draw on anthropological studies of racialization, especially that of racecraft as proffered by Jemima Pierre in her work on postcolonial Ghana. In addition, authors draw on analyses of race and music drawing from hip hop studies, performance studies, and sound studies.[23] Multiple entries draw on studies of blackface both in the US and outside of it and several refer to racial dynamics in literature, film, dance, comics.[24] Others draw on studies of neoliberal subjectivity and neoliberal security states.[25]

This intersection of literature supports forum authors as they follow their material archives and the "invitation[s they offer] to escape national and colonial epistemologies."[26] The framework of "cultural constructions of race and racism" is deliberately chosen to mirror contemporary emphasis in cultural studies writ large away from race as an identity or as difference.[27] The forum is less committed to building an understanding of different racialized identities in the region (Black, indigenous, white, et al.) or racialized essences (Blackness, whiteness, etc.) and the distances between them, as it is to calling attention to how racialized meaning coheres, is produced, is sustained. In this, the forum most directly leans on cultural studies' legacy of audiences and reception, while it feels out what practices of racialization rooted in the MENA/SWANA might contribute to analysis of coloniality/decoloniality and other postcolonial models of power.

Other threads of critical debates in the study of race and anti-racist struggle also appear. The debate over intersectionality, while not addressed in entries explicitly, resonates in

attention to overlapping colonial vestiges and how local, regional, and transnational power multiply interpellate MENA/SWANA subjects. Indeed, while the debate over and recognition of "matrixes of domination" in the US context have foregrounded recognition of how race, class, and gender simultaneously work on different subjects, forum authors here ask for recognition of how nation, empire, ethnicity, sect, religion—in addition to class, gender, and race—also intersect and interpellate subjects in the region and its diasporas.[28] Finally, forum entries also operate with an awareness of the recent deepening of the debate over Afropessimism and the influence of a notion of an anti-Black ontology on the study of race in this region and outside of it. Muriam Davis's entry, "Incommensurate Ontologies?: Anti-Black Racism and the Question of Islam in French Algeria" is most explicit in this engagement, while the forum as a whole gestures towards the need for further elaboration of what shape "social death"[29] as a result of specific patterns of immigration, dispossession, representation, repression in this region takes, and, as a result, to what extent recent accusations of regional anti-Blackness should hold.[30]

We begin with Beeta Baghoolizadeh's exploration of the Iranian figure *Haji Firuz* < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/myths-haji-firuz-racist-contours-iranian-minstrel-baghoolizadeh/> . Popular during the Persian New Year festival, *Nowruz*, Baghoolizadeh explores how this popular blackface character has been defended as "tradition" while experiencing periods of official disavowal by the Islamic Republic. Baghoolizadeh shifts her inquiry from *who is Haji Firuz and where did he come from?* to *who is Haji Firuz and how do we let him go?* —pointing to the work she identifies as necessary for contemporary Iranians to face and accept histories of slavery and Afro-Iranian erasure. Her analysis is echoed by Parisa Vaziri in a later entry in the forum, which traces how the character moves across other media like film and comics.

From here, the forum hosts two jointly-authored pieces, putting examples from Egypt and Syria and from Libya and Lebanon, respectively, in direct conversation with each other. Both pieces explore constructions of race in music and music industries. The first, "An (Un)Marked Foreigner: Race-Making in Egyptian, Syrian, and German Popular Cultures" < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/unmarked-foreigner-race-egyptian-syrian-german-popular-cultures-silverstein-sprengel/> by Shayna Silverstein and Darci Sprengel begins with the ethnographers' recognition of persistent refusal to engage the 'concept of race' among their Arab interlocutors. Exploring logics of security and tolerance as they appear in the touring and immigration patterns of their research partners, Sprengel and Silverstein argue for the recognition of "global configurations of identity, culture, and empire" including but not limited to celebrations of multiculturalism widespread in the US and Western Europe. Their entry gestures towards how cultures of multiculturalism and security are reflected and refracted from Europe (Italy, Germany) to the Arab world (Egypt, Syria). In the second coauthored piece, "On Blackness and the Nation in Arab Hip Hop," < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/blackness-nation-arabic-hip-hop-lebanon-libya-nickell-benkato/> Chris Nickell and Adam Benkato examine flare-ups of anti-Blackness within the genre of hip hop in Arabic. Nickell takes as his example one of the early iterations of rap "battles" staged in Beirut, Lebanon in 2015, where Lebanese emcees confront each other in overtly racist jibes, while Benkato explores how constructed characters in Libyan music video clips reinforce specific ideas about blackness, Libyanness, and violence in the years following Qaddafi's ouster. Their piece asks hip hop makers and fans (and hip hop studies)

to consider critically the circulation of racialized stereotypes while it presses for an articulation of hip hop masculinity so far left unelaborated by a slate of scholarship celebrating hip hop and the so-called "Arab Spring."

Bam Willoughby's entry, "Opposing a Spectacle of Blackness: *Arap Baci, Baci Kalfa, Dadi,* and the Invention of African Presence in Turkey" < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/opposing-spectacle-blackness-arap-baci-kalfa-dad-african-presence-turkey-willoughby/> explores twin features of visual representation for an Afro-Turk community. Highlighting commercial circulations of Black women in the characters of Arap Kizi and Baci Kalfa in ads for sweets and soap, Willoughby analyzes how the drag performance builds specific ideas about domesticity in the Turkish cultural landscape. Sascha Crasnow then elaborates the first of two pieces about ethnic erasure in contemporary Israel. Crasnow explores the appropriation and de-Arabization of Yemeni dance in Israeli culture < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/cooption-erasure-mizrahi-culture-israel-crasnow/> through a close examination of the work of Leor Grady. Her piece offers an exploration of white supremacy in Ashkenazi and Mizrahi communities in Israel. From here, Muriam Davis reads anti-Black racism and Islamophobia together in an unpacking of the rhetoric of the French Left < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/incommensurate-ontologies-anti-black-racism-islam-french-algeria-davis/> . Elaborating how the colonial occupation of Algeria collapsed distinctions between race and religion, Davis argues for a reading of anti-Black racism and Islamophobia together. From here, Parisa Vaziri returns us to a discussion of the Iranian blackface character Haji Firuz < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/thaumaturgic-cartoon-blackface-vaziri/> to which we began. Contextualizing the figure vis-à-vis other forms of popular culture—1960s comic strips and popular Iranian films (*filmfarsi*), Vaziri argues for an intermedial understanding of the racial textures of the Nowruz jester.

The two closing pieces draw the forum to a close with critical reflections on whiteness—Greg Burris in Israel and Leila Tayeb in North Africa. Burris acknowledges an outpouring of liberal political energy in Israel surrounding the plight of African asylum seekers in the 2010s. However, by considering the representations of these refugees in several documentary Israeli films, he offers an indictment of Israeli liberalism < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/black-skin-white-cameras-african-asylum-seekers-israeli-documentary-film-burris/> that celebrates white feminism at the continued erasure of African representation. Tayeb's entry emphasizes the "array of things that formations of whiteness *do* and *enable* in the context of North Africa." She concludes the forum by outlining suggestions for further reading < https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/whiteness-in-north-africa-tayeb/> arguing, "It is imperative that we do not stop at noting the anti-Black racism that we rightly see in these, but rather go on additionally to theorize the racial and spatial whiteness that these practices enable and uphold."

Aware of the multiple audiences which it faces, the forum is imagined as part of ongoing and urgently needed anti-racist work in this region and beyond.

Notes

1. While the acronym MENA—Middle East and North Africa—reflects the dominant way in which this region is referred to in academic discussions and media debates, recent activist energy has turned to encourage the use of a less colonized alternative, SWANA—Southwest Asia and North Africa. The latter decenters the Americas and Europe as cartographic center of the planet. Mobilization around the term increased in the late 2010s as activists vied for a MENA/SWANA category on the US census. Americans from this region are currently legally classified as "white"; activists were working towards a new category. The request was denied for the 2020 census. On the use of SWANA over MENA, see a number of university club statements—for example, Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment, George Mason University (https://ccee.gmu.edu/swana < https://ccee.gmu.edu/swana/>). The forum introduction uses MENA/SWANA as a commitment to the new acronym SWANA while recognizing it is less readily recognizable than MENA. On the census, see Sarah Parvini and Ellis Simani, "Are Arabs and Iranians White? Census Says Yes, but Many Disagree," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2019, https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-me-census-middle-east-north-africa-race/ < https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-me-census-middle-east-north-africa-race/> ; Moustafa Bayoumi, "I'm A Brown Arab-American and the US Census Refuses to Recognize Me," *The Guardian,* February 14, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/14/arab-american-census-america-racism < https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/14/arab-american-census-america-racism> . ↩

2. Specifically, the suburban US Midwest and the urban US Northeast, and Lebanon and Palestine. ↩

3. Eve Troutt Powell, "Blackness in the Middle East: A Virtual Panel Discussion," September 16, 2020, Middle East Center, University of Pennsylvania, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1t2Vl0yoOTRrXWbJpaW-KYeRAwtMtap4b/view < https://drive.google.com/file/d/1t2Vl0yoOTRrXWbJpaW-KYeRAwtMtap4b/view> , accessed November 23, 2020. ↩

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The Myths of Haji Firuz: The Racist Contours of the Iranian Minstrel

by Beeta Baghoolizadeh | Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA), Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT Every year, around the arrival of the Spring equinox, Iranians in Iran and in diaspora will recognize a minstrel named Haji Firuz with his Nowruz jingle. The inclusion of Haji Firuz during Nowruz festivities has been questioned and challenged for decades; where some will point out his connections to anti-Blackness, others will defend Haji Firuz, arguing that his face is only covered in soot from fires also associated with the holiday. This article contextualizes these arguments as a part of a larger discourse of denying racism in Iran and, more poignantly, erasing Iran's history of slavery altogether. This article addresses the consequences and pitfalls of defending Haji Firuz's blackface performance, and its implications for the broader Iranian community.

KEYWORDS anti-Blackness, blackface, Haji Firuz, Iran, minstrel, Norooz, slavery

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برای ترجمه‌ی این مقاله به زبان فارسی به این لینک مراجع فرمایید

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Every spring equinox, Iranians celebrate Nowruz[1] with a popular jingle:

> My Master, hold your head up high,
> My Master, why don't you laugh?
> It's Nowruz, it's one day a year!

A man dressed as "Haji Firuz" sings this seemingly innocuous rhyme. His costume requires only a red outfit, a tambourine, and, most notably, a blackened face.

***

In 2012, I gave a talk on race in Iran, where I described Haji Firuz's roots in Iran's history of slavery. The audience, a mix of academics and community members from the greater *Tehrangeles* area, met my presentation with a mix of applause and booing. One individual stood up and said, "everything you've said is wrong. I'll bring you a source that proves where Haji Firuz is really from."[2] The next day, he handed me a handwritten polemic, "Who is Haji Firuz, and where did he come from?"[3] The essay described him as an age-old character of happiness and good cheer, whose blackened face has origins in a Zoroastrian past.[4]

Haji Firuz does have a long history, but not quite as long as some may think. His supporters insist on his ancient origins, excusing his blackened face with a myriad of myths. But records of a Nowruz herald named *Haji Firuz* are less than a century old, mostly from after the abolition of slavery in 1929.[5] This article examines the popular genealogies surrounding Haji Firuz and how they obfuscate the role of racism in creating this holiday figure.

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Blackness serves as a specific marker in the history of slavery and race in Iran. Over the centuries, the term *siyah* has expanded or contracted to include different groups of peoples. During the Safavid era, *siyah* was more likely to refer to South Asians, particularly enslaved eunuchs.[6] By the late nineteenth century, *siyah* referred to East Africans enslaved by well-to-do and royal Iranians. While other populations had before been subject to enslavement, including Caucasians, Central Asians, and South Asians, geopolitical changes left East Africans most vulnerable, thus racializing Iran's system of slavery to the point where almost anyone referred to as *siyah,* "Black," was likely enslaved.

Treaties promising to end the Persian Gulf slave trade were repeatedly made and broken until 1929, when Reza Shah's cabinet pushed the abolition of slavery in a bid to appear modern and Westernized on an international stage. As such, any references to the enslavement of peoples were erased from public spaces. Freedpeoples, overwhelmingly of African ancestry, were also erased as the Shah openly embraced the Aryan myth,[7] which purported that Iranians were inheritors of an ancient white racial legacy.[8] The major exception to these elisions, however, came in *siyah-bazi*, the blackface minstrelsy shows that mocked enslaved people. As the collective memory waned and the idea of Iranian slavery became taboo, these shows grew in popularity, and alternate explanations emerged to justify and preserve them.

Siyah-bazi, "playing black," performances developed at the Qajar court in the late nineteenth century. Again the term *siyah* morphed, now referring to a character who appears onstage in blackface. These performances are usually set at court or in high society and are performed year-round, making broader social critiques relevant to the audience's everyday lives.[9] Similar to blackface minstrelsy in the United States, these shows rely on slapstick and other forms of comedy through music, song, dance, as well as jokes based on miscommunication or misunderstandings, and more. During the Pahlavi era, *siyah-bazi* went from a court show performed for royals to one seen in the streets and theaters of major urban centers across Iran.

The legacy of slavery in *siyah-bazi* is, however, highly specific. While elite and wealthy Iranians had enslaved men, women, and eunuchs, *siyah-bazi* targeted caricatures of eunuchs. Eunuchs served as harem guards, as confidants, and were trusted managers of day-to-day operations at courts. High-ranking eunuchs held more power than many of the free members of court.[10] Their hyper-sexualization and desexualization—as men who required castration so they could interact with court women freely without suspicion—is a central theme in *siyah-bazi*. Even the names of the *siyah* characters, often Mubarak or Haji Firuz, are derived from popular names for slaves in Iran and the Persian Gulf region.[11]

Yet the rendering of the main subject of *siyah-bazi*—a simpleton prone to mistakes—in the image of the eunuch reminds the audience that no matter what power a eunuch may have had, he was still enslaved and vulnerable to denigration as an enslaved person. The *siyah* in *siyah-bazi* speaks in a high-pitched voice, has accented Persian, is in close quarters

with their master, manages their master's work, and so forth. He is often lustful, but not a suitable partner.[12] In sum, the *siyah* draws directly from crude stereotypes about eunuchs in the Qajar era.

Haji Firuz emerged out of *siyah-bazi*, and his popularity is tied to the growth of these performances in the 1920s and 1930s in Tehran.[13] While *siyah-bazi* remained broad in their scope, Haji Firuz was associated with the new year.[14] His striking appearance and jingles made him a recognizable fixture in Nowruz celebrations. As the Pahlavi shahs presented themselves as inheritors of an ancient Iran, Iranian nationalists sought to locate examples of "folk" theater not tied to Islam as evidence of the depth of popular culture.[15] *Siyah-bazi* became recognized as a genre of theater unto itself, and actors, such as Sa'di Afshar, built their entire careers around the character of the *siyah* and achieved national fame.[16]

The popular cause to defend Haji Firuz came to a fore after the 1979 revolution. While some of the narratives developed during the Pahlavi era, they became more formalized and virulent out of a reaction to the Islamic Republic and its control over public culture in Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini was known for indicting the United States as the very embodiment of injustice, including racism,[17] and the Islamic Republic fashioned itself as the leader of anti-imperialist movements for the Global South. But *siyah-bazi* jeopardized the Islamic Republic's reputation as an anti-racist international force, as non-Iranians would readily recognize it as blackface. To mitigate this, government officials cracked down on *siyah-bazi* in the early years of the Islamic Republic. Some *siyah-bazi* theater actors continued with their shows but avoided painting their faces. Haji Firuzes were generally discouraged and sometimes arrested. Because the Islamic Republic had also banned particular forms of music and dancing in public on religious grounds, many viewed the new policies as "anti-happiness" and were unable to extricate the racial reasons why banning Haji Firuz might be different than the justifications for regulating music.[18] Because of his association with Nowruz, a pre-Islamic holiday, the defense of Haji Firuz became especially important to those who felt antagonized by the Islamic Republic.

As these political changes threatened Haji Firuz's existence, those defending him developed complex explanations. Some attributed his blackface to soot from the Chaharshanbe Suri fires that Iranians jump over on the last Tuesday night of the year, while others suggested that Haji Firuz was actually a Zoroastrian priest whose face was blackened from tending to a sacred fire. And yet, I have never come across an account of anyone becoming black in the face from jumping over a fire, nor does the idea that Haji Firuz might have been a mobad fit with Zoroastrian ideas of purity and cleanliness. In both cases, the explanations take examples that are popularly considered as native or ancient to Iran and make logical leaps to connect them to Haji Firuz as a part of a shared cultural heritage.

Still more complex explanations evolved as well, where some described him as a reincarnation of Siavash, a character in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. The *Shahnameh*, a tenth-century epic, gained importance amongst nationalists in the twentieth century who viewed it as a preservation of a pure pre-Islamic "Persian" past and culture. The *Shahnameh* presents Siavash as a chivalrous and dignified prince. His name, *Sia-vash,* originally *Sia-vakhsh,* refers to his black horse.[19] Over time, the reading of *Siavakhsh* became rare, allowing defenders of Haji Firuz in the twentieth century to interpret it as "black in appearance" to fit their explanations. This does not align with premodern etymologies of the name, and no reference in the *Shahnameh* suggests that he was Black or a jester.[20]

Yet in 1983, Mehrdad Bahar linked Haji Firuz to Siavash, Mesopotamian deities, and rites in the afterlife. Bahar described Haji Firuz as Siavash arisen from the dead, his blackened face an ashy return to the living world.[21] Bahar's treatment ignored any of the direct links between Haji Firuz's persona and the caricatures of African slaves at the Qajar court. Nor does it mention why a resurrected prince would use pidgin Persian or expressions of servitude, such as calling for his master. Instead, Bahar echoed narratives that had emerged in the Pahlavi era, erasing any references to slavery or race, and created an explanation that justifies Haji Firuz's presence in Nowruz festivities and renders his person into a cultural cause that must be preserved for the sake of history. Connecting Haji Firuz to elements of pre-Islamic Iran, either through distorted ideas of Zoroastrianism or misreadings of characters from the *Shahnameh,* frames Haji Firuz as a cultural figure whose existence is threatened by a hardline Islamic government.

At the same time, material representations of Haji Firuz grew more common, further embedding his visuality into Nowruz traditions. From Haji Firuz yarn dolls made by blind patients to raise money for the Kahrizak Foundation to greeting cards of Haji Firuz playing his tambourine, Haji Firuz has been consistently portrayed with a red outfit, a rounded hat, and a blackened face.[22] All material renderings rely on a blackened face to visually indicate that this object is a Haji Firuz. A doll or an illustration without a black face may not even be recognizable as a Haji Firuz, but rather may be mistaken for a doll wearing any red outfit. The importance of the blackened face, however, is diminished in live-action, as other characteristics, such as accent or comportment can communicate the racialized caricature in the absence of blackface.

I met with Javad Ensafi, a *siyah-bazi* actor at Mehrab Theater in Tehran, in 2015. Ensafi, who has performed on the radio, in television, in films, and on stage since the 1970s, spoke with me about his experiences in theater before going onstage as the *siyah* in *Chillih Zari va Chillih Amu Jun*. Ensafi ushered me into a dressing room to talk about *siyah-bazi,* its history, and his experiences.[23] His wife, Forugh Yazdan-Ashuri, who also performed in the night's show, joined the conversation as well.

Ensafi opened the discussion with the genre's ancient roots, which he dated to the pre-Islamic period per rock reliefs that depicted court life. "There's always a jester," he said, "and that is where the *siyah* comes from." But the reliefs are not colored, so I pushed him on where the blackface comes from. Ensafi described the blackface as a marginal detail, a visual device that highlights the funniest character onstage. He made this same argument about Haji Firuz as well: "Haji Firuz does not need to appear in a blackened face." In fact, in recent years, Ensafi has appeared on television in the role of Haji Firuz, dressed in a red outfit without a blackened face. Ensafi's own book on Nowruz traditions, however, includes the following description:

> In some cities, among them Tehran, around the time of Nowruz two individuals—one Black (Haji Firuz) and one an older man (Amu Nowruz)—arrive and sing, and with their stylized sentences perform a type of show that brings people's happiness and laughter.[24]

Although Ensafi suggested that Haji Firuz does not need a blackened face, his own writing highlights that Blackness is the defining element of his character.

Ensafi's description of Haji Firuz as not requiring a blackened face can be understood as a semantic effort to preserve the character in face of government hostility.[25] Ensafi, who has

acted as a *siyah* for the past few decades, recalled various government officials from different departments approaching him and requesting—or perhaps strongly suggesting—that he not blacken his face for his performances during the early period of the Islamic Republic. Similarly, he abandoned blackening his face in state television roles.[26] His role as the *siyah* remained relatively unchanged. "I say, 'you don't want me to have a blackened face? Fine. But it changes nothing about the rest of the show.'"[27] Indeed, blackface minstrelsy requires more than simply blackening one's face. In that night's performance, Ensafi began with a bare face, maintaining the other elements that distinguished his character—his simple red outfit, his pidgin Persian, and his body's comportment. About halfway through the program, he theatrically applied a black ointment to his skin, to the cheers of the audience.[28] Though his acting remained unchanged, the audience appreciated the second half of the show much more, as evidenced by their louder cheers, more boisterous laughs, and their palpable excitement.

Ensafi's involvement in *siyah-bazi* remains a passion project for him and his wife, as well as their son, Amir Husayn Ensafi, who also acts onstage. Before I wrapped up my conversation with Ensafi, Yazdan-Ashuri pulled me aside, asking why I was interested. I told her I was writing about *siyah-bazi* and its parallels with US blackface minstrelsy. "Oh good," she replied, "you can tell everyone how different ours is from that. Everyone keeps saying this is racist, but we say no, this is tradition."[29]

Other lovers of *siyah-bazi* and Haji Firuz do not view the government's stance as one motivated by anti-racist inclinations. Instead, they see the Islamic Republic as choking the nation of folk entertainment. Though dressing up as a Haji Firuz is not technically illegal in Iran, officials do sometimes arrest Haji Firuzes per public indecency laws, especially if they are performing—dancing, singing, and the like—in public spaces. As such, these arrests are sporadic and not uniform. They are, however, often publicized by supporters of Haji Firuz on the internet, where the arrests are described as an unjust encounter between a simple, happy tradition versus an authoritarian government. For example, *Iran Global*, an online media outlet, published an image of an officer arresting a Haji Firuz with the following caption: "According to reports from Rasht, a Haji Firuz brought happiness and laughter . . . but officials of the oppressive regime attacked and arrested him."[30] The article's caption casts this Haji Firuz as innocent, only wanting to make others happy, an intention crushed by the overpowering presence of the Islamic Republic.

This remained a common stance until recently when Iranian rapper Hichkas (Soroush Lashkari) released the song "Firooz" in 2015.



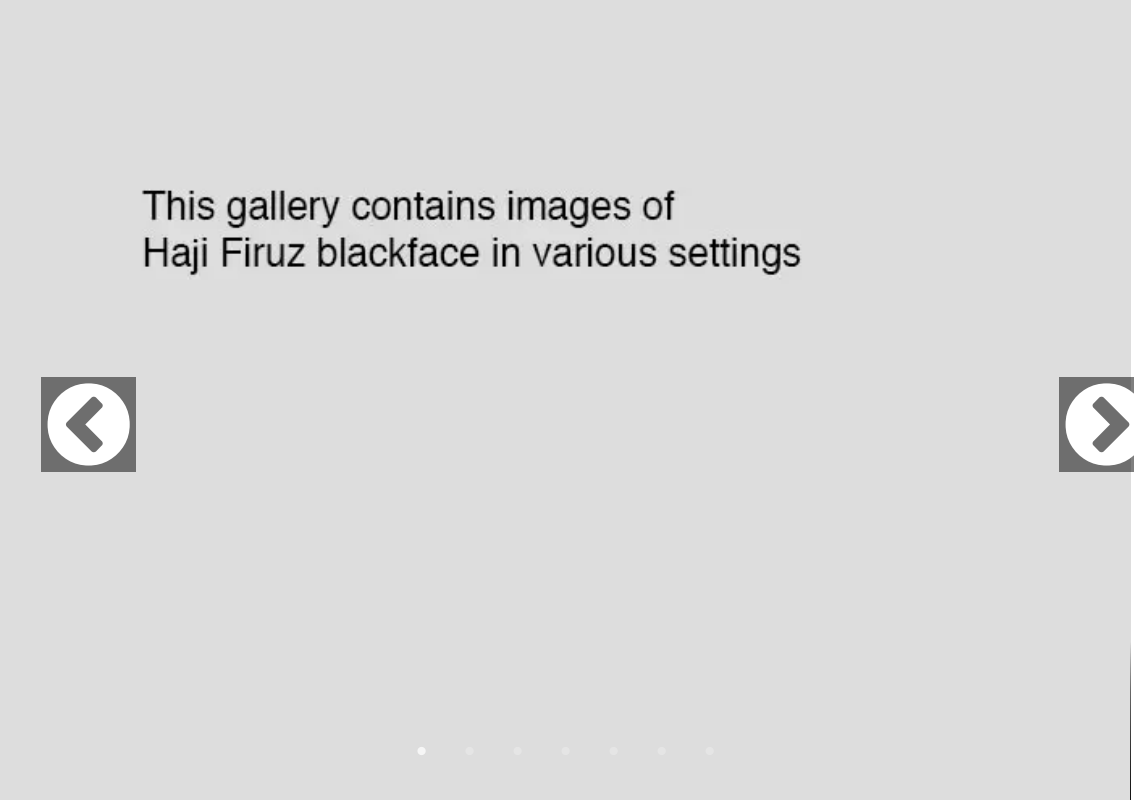
Moltafet, "*Firooz,*" March 2015, YouTube video, 3:32, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxkncQCpzzc < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxkncQCpzzc>

Instead of casting the issue of Haji Firuz as a cultural war with the Islamic Republic, Lashkari pointed to the economic conditions that drive people to dress as Haji Firuzes and the underlying history of slavery informing the character's behavior. While some formal Nowruz performances do include Haji Firuz, most Haji Firuzes are typically younger men from lower socio-economic backgrounds who busk in between cars stuck at traffic lights or out on sidewalks to make some extra money in the holiday season. Lashkari's lyrics describe a young man, the family breadwinner, who has spoken to his boss about his financial situation to no avail, who cannot pay the bills, who has hit a dead end in every effort and has no option but to lose his dignity acting as a Haji Firuz on the streets.

Lashkari continues in sharp irony, "dance, dance, dance / let's celebrate slavery" and, "I suppose every day in Africa is Nowruz / Because if this is how we calculate it, it must be full of Haji Firuzes." He then launches into a series of questions, including the pointed "where did our ancestors buy you from?" Lashkari's rap reflects two elements in the existence of Haji Firuz in Iran—first, that Haji Firuzes make a mockery of Africans who were forcefully brought to Iran, and second, the practice persists primarily in Iran because of economic conditions that leave low-wage workers little recourse. Lashkari's sentiments echo those of Mahdi Akhavan-Sales, who, in 1951, wrote a footnote to a Nowruz poem in which he described his hatred of the Haji Firuz practice that has emerged out of Tehran for its ridiculing of slaves. Akhavan-Sales clarified that his animosity was not towards the people who are driven to do it out of hunger, but rather for the tradition as a whole.[31] While Akhavan-Sales buried his complaints in the notes of his anthology, Lashkari's rang out on his global platform, sparking discussions on social media platforms almost immediately.[32] Fans questioned whether Haji Firuz was linked to slavery, if Haji Firuz could still be Haji Firuz without a blackened face, and what should be done about the tradition as a whole.

The question "who is Haji Firuz and where did he come from?" leads us down a myriad of complicated explanations, many obscuring or ignoring the history of slavery altogether, all

in an effort to absolve oneself from enjoying the performance of a blackface minstrel. Perhaps we should rewrite the question and ask, "who is Haji Firuz, and how do we let him go?" In Nowruz of 2019, a local activist organization called SWANA-LA set up a booth at the annual *Sizdah-bidar* Nowruz picnic. Stationed at Irvine's Mason Park, one of the largest Nowruz hubs drawing thousands of celebratory diaspora Iranians in Southern California, SWANA-LA members put up signs in Persian and English reading "Haji Firuz is Racist" and "We must put Haji Firuz aside." While some attendees were receptive to their message, others threatened the activists, tore down their posters, and insulted them. In one exchange, an older man cried, "why are you doing this? I love Haji Firuz, he made me so happy, he made us all so happy."[33] His happiness, they replied, should not be predicated on defending a racist caricature, a feat that seems harder for some than it should.



Notes

1. Nowruz, "new day," coincides with the spring equinox and marks the first day of the new year.
2. Beeta Baghoolizadeh, "Iranian Racism: Its History and Its Lingering Legacy," International Conference on the Iranian Diaspora, International Alliances Across Borders, UCLA, 2012.
3. *"Haji Firuz kist, va az kuja amad?"*
4. This reference to a Zoroastrian past is one deeply embedded in Iranian nationalism. Zoroastrianism was an imperial religion prior to Islam and continues to be practiced by a religious minority in Iran and around the world. During the Pahlavi era, Zoroastrianism grew significant to Pahlavi expressions of nationalism, and continues to be popular amongst nationalists. Afshin Marashi, *Exile and the Nation: The Parsi Community of India and the Making of Modern Iran* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020).
5. Haji Firuz's static existence—the blackface, the red outfit, the tambourine and the jingle—is inseparable from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century iterations of slavery and racism in Iran.

Beeta Baghoolizadeh, "Seeing Race and Erasing Slavery: Media and the Construction of Blackness in Iran, 1840–1960" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2018), 199–204. Angelita Reyes has written a comparative study of Haji Firuz, the Mammy, and Zwarte Piet. Angelita D. Reyes, "Perfomativity and representation in transnational blackface: Mammy (USA), Zwarte Piet (Netherlands), and Haji Firuz (Iran)," *Atlantic Studies* 16, no. 4 (2019): 521–550.

6. South Asians made up the majority of eunuchs who were "black" at the Safavid court (1501–1736), as opposed to Caucasian eunuchs who were "white." Sussan Babaie, Kathryn Babayan, Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, and Massumeh Farhad, *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 158. Prior to the Safavid era, poets writing in Persian would use *siyah* to refer to East Africans or South Asians, depending on the associated words or context. Poets would pair *siyah* with *hindu* to refer to South Asians or with *zangi* to refer to East Africans. See *Haft Peykar* by Nizami (twelfth–thirteenth century), the *Masnavi* by Rumi (thirteenth century), *Ganjoor*, accessed August 15, 2020, https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/7peykar/sh5 < https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/7peykar/sh5/> .

7. Baghoolizadeh, "Seeing Race and Erasing Slavery," 164–206. The transition from a diverse range of enslaved peoples to almost exclusively East Africans paired with the rise of Aryanism amongst Iranian nationalists beginning in the late nineteenth century created a black-white binary. Prior to the late nineteenth century, Iranians viewed themselves as neither white nor black.

8. For a discussion on the ideologies surrounding the Aryan myth in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Reza Zia Ebrahimi, *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

9. For a brief discussion of *siyah-bazi* theater, see Maziar Shirazi, "A Review of Tarabnameh, or, Why Are Iranian-Americans Laughing at Blackface in 2016?" Ajam Media Collective, December 7, 2016, https://ajammc.com/2016/12/07/why-are-iranian-americans-laughing-at-blackface-in-2016 < https://ajammc.com/2016/12/07/why-are-iranian-americans-laughing-at-blackface-in-2016/> .

10. This was true for both eunuchs of East African or Caucasian backgrounds. For examples from the Qajar court, see 'Azod al-Dowleh, *Life at the Court of the Early Qajar Shahs*, trans. Eskandari-Qajar (Washington: Mage Publishers, 2014), 49; Dust 'Ali Khan Muayyir al-Mamalik, *Khatirat-i Nasir al-Din Shah* (Tehran: Naqsh-i Jahan), 18; I'timad al-Saltanih, *Ruznamih Khatirat-i I'timad al-Saltanih* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 2010), 526–527.

11. A eunuch named Haji Firuz served as a eunuch at the court of Nasir al-Din Shah (r. 1848–1896). Baghoolizadeh, "Seeing Race and Erasing Slavery," 84. Searches for "Firuz/Firooz" or "Mobarak/Mubarak" in the British Library materials in the Qatar Digital Library reveal the commonality of the names for enslaved men across the Persian Gulf region in the nineteenth century, including Iran. For example, see Files 5/191 III Individual Slavery Cases; File A/2 II Slave Trade, Correspondence with Bushire regarding slaves and their manumission certificates and applications, *Qatar Digital Library,* accessed August 1, 2020, qdl.qa.

12. For a photographic history of how eunuch's portraits inspired clowns and minstrels in their shows between 1896 and 1906, see Baghoolizadeh, "Seeing Race and Erasing Slavery," 67–114.

13. Sa'di Afshar, as narrated to Laleh Alam, *'Ali Jināb Sīyāh: Zindigī va Khātirāt-i Sa'di Afshar* (Tehran: Pūyandih, 2012), 47–48.

14. Haji Firuz dolls signal that by the 1960s and 1970s the character had expanded beyond simple street performances. "Poupée de chiffon, tunique de soie artificielle," Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, 1979, accessed February 4, 2019, http://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/explorer-les-collections/base/Work/action/show/notice/799998-poupee-de-chiffon-tunique-de-soie-artificielle/page/1 < http://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/explorer-les-collections/base/Work/action/show/notice/799998-poupee-de-chiffon-tunique-de-soie-artificielle/page/1/> ; "Poupée représentant un danseur," Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, 1960s, accessed February 4, 2019, http://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/explorer-les-collections/base/Work/action/show/notice/73391-poupee-representant-un-danseur/page/1 < http://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/explorer-les-collections/base/Work/action/show/notice/73391-poupee-representant-un-danseur/page/1/> . Many thanks to Mira Xenia Schwerda for alerting me to these dolls.

15. Ta'ziyeh plays and Ashura processions are older forms of theater in Iran, however, because of their religious significance, they were not inscribed in the national canon in the way that *siyah-bazi* or Haji Firuz were. See Kamran Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015) and *The Women of Karbala: Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi'i Islam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); William O. Beeman, *Iranian Performance Traditions* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2011); Kelsey Rice, "Emissaries of Enlightenment: Azeri Theater Troupes in Iran and Central Asia, 1906–44," *Iranian Studies* (2020).

16. Afshar, *'Ali Jināb Sīyāh: Zindigī va Khātirāt-i Sa'di Afshar.*

17. Khomeini was exiled in November 1964 and returned to Iran in January 1979. From Najaf and Paris, he gave speeches where he linked the Shah's rule to the United States until he returned for the revolution. Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 445, 461.

18. Negative feelings about these policies went beyond the regulation of Haji Firuz. Nahid Siamdoust discusses the changes in the broad scope of music regulation after the 1979 revolution. Nahid Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2017).

19. The original form of Siavash, "Siiāuuaršan," is derived from the Avestan for "the one with the black stallions." "KAYĀNIĀN vi. Siiāuuaršan, Siyāwaxš, Siāvaš," Encyclopaedia Iranica, accessed April 15, 2020, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kayanian-vi < https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kayanian-vi> .

20. See Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, *Abu' Qasem Ferdowsi: The Shahnameh (The Book of Kings)* (New York: SUNY Press, 2007).

21. Mahmoud Omidsalar, "ḤĀJI FIRUZ," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, XI/5, 551–552, accessed December 30, 2012, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haji-firuz < http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haji-firuz> .

22. Collection of the author, from 1995–2015.

23. Many thanks to Ali Karjoo-Ravary for joining me.

24. Javad Ensafi, *Navid-i Bahar: Namayish-i siyah-bazi-yih Nowruz va Piruz* (Tehran: Chap-i Mahrang, 1392), 33. Translation by author.

25. One may note that the material reliance on blackface, as is the case with dolls or illustrations, is not as necessary with human performances. Instead, the individual's acting can cue the audience that he is a *siyah* and not just any person in a red costume.

26. Although Ensafi has had greater freedom recently in using blackface onstage, state television programs generally avoid it.

27. Conversation with Javad Ensafi, Mehrab Theater, Tehran, December 30, 2015.

28. "Chillih Zari va Amu Chillih Jun (Shab-i Yalda)," Mehrab Theater, Tehran, December 30, 2015.

29. Conversation with Forugh Yazdan-Ashuri, Mehrab Theater, Tehran, December 30, 2015.

30. "The Arrest of One Haji Firuz in Rashti + Photographs," *Iran Global*, March 13, 2013, https://iranglobal.info/node/17066 < https://iranglobal.info/node/17066> .

31. Mahdi Akhavan-Salis, *Arghanūn: Majmu'ih Sh'ir* (Tehran: Murvārīd, 1951), 77. Baghoolizadeh, "Seeing Race and Erasing Slavery," 203.

32. @HichkasOfficial, Twitter, March 16, 2015, https://twitter.com/HichkasOfficial/status/578312152429293569 < https://twitter.com/HichkasOfficial/status/578312152429293569> .

33. Conversations with SWANA-LA member Pouneh Behin, April 1, 2019. @swanalosangeles, "Members of SWANA-LA and other community members..." *Instagram,* April 3, 2019,

https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv0PPjpBLG2/?igshid=1i678q792tqrz <
https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv0PPjpBLG2/?igshid=1i678q792tqrz> .

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افسانه های حاجی فیروز: نمودهای نژادپرستانه ی تخت حوضی ایرانی

توسط بیتا بقولی‌زاده | سازه های فرهنگی نژاد و نژادپرستی در خاورمیانه و شمال آفریقا/ جنوب غربی آسیا و شمال آفریقا < https://csalateral.org/archive/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/>

ترجمه توسط الهه نژادحسین

خلاصه: هر ساله حوالی فرارسیدن بهار، ایرانیان در ایران و خارج از کشور، دلقک سیاه چهره ای به نام حاجی فیروز را با طنین زنگ نوروزی اش میشناسند. گنجاندن حاجی فیروز در جشن های نوروزی دهه هاست که مورد سوال و چالش قرار گرفته است. در حالی که برخی به ارتباط او با ضدیت با سیاه پوستان اشاره میکنند، دیگران با این استدلال که صورت او فقط با دوده ناشی از آتش های مربوط با جشن ها پوشیده شده است، از حاجی فیروز دفاع میکنند. این مقاله این مباحث را به عنوان بخشی از گفتمان بزرگتر انکار نژادپرستی در ایران و تلخ تر از آن، حذف کردن کامل تاریخ برده داری ایران زمینه یابی میکند. این مقاله عواقب و خطرات دفاع از اجرای حاجی فیروز سیاه چهره و پیامد های آن برای جامعه بزرگ ایرانی را مورد بررسی قرار میدهد

کلید واژه ها: ضدیت با سیاهان – سیاه چهره – حاجی فیروز – ایران – تخت حوضی – نوروز – برده داری

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برای سایت این نسخه:

حوضی ایرانی،" مترجم الهه بیتا بقولی‌زاده "افسانه های حاجی فیروز: نمود های نمودهای نژادپرستانه ی تخت (نژادحسین، لترال ۱۰.۱ (۲۰۲۱

https://doi.org/10.25158/L10.1.12.fa < https://doi.org/10.25158/L10.1.12.fa>

هر سال بهار ایرانیان نوروز[۱] را با یک طنین صدای محبوب جشن میگیرند:

ارباب خودم سرت و بالا کن "
ارباب خودم چرا نمیخندی؟
نوروزه، سالی یه روزه!

و مردی با لباس "حاجی فیروز" این شعر به ظاهر بی ضرر را میخواند. ظاهرش به یک لباس قرمز احتیاج دارد و یک دایره زنگی و از همه مهم تر یک صورت سیاه شده

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در سال ۲۰۱۲ میلادی (۱۳۹۱ شمسی)، من در مورد نژاد در ایران سخنرانی ای کردم و ریشه های حاجی فیروز را در تاریخ برده داری ایران شرح دادم. مخاطبان، ترکیبی از دانشگاهیان و اعضای جامعه ایرانیان منطقه بزرگ تهرانجلس، سخنرانی من را با ترکیبی از تشویق و هو کردن پاسخ دادند. یک نفر بلند شد و گفت "هر چه گفتید اشتباه است. من برای شما منبعی می آوردم که ثابت کند حاجی فیروز واقعا از کجاست."[۲] روز بعد او یک بحث دست نوشته به من تحویل داد، "حاجی فیروز

کیست و از کجا آمده است؟[۳]". متن یادداشت او را به عنوان یک شخصیت باستانی شاد و بشاش توصیف میکند که چهره ی سیاه شده اش در تاریخ زرتشتی ریشه دارد.[۴]

حاجی فیروز تاریخ طولانی ای دارد، اما نه آنقدر که برخی فکر میکنند. طرفدارانش بر ریشه های باستانی او اصرار دارند، و چهره ی سیاه شده اش را با هزاران افسانه توجیه میکنند. اما سوابق قاصد نوروزی به نام حاجی فیروز کمتر از یک قرن قدمت دارد، که بیشتر به بعد از لغو برده داری در ۱۹۲۹ میلادی (۱۳۰۸ شمسی) مربوط می باشد.[۵] این مقاله شجره نامه های معروف پیرامون حاجی فیروز را مورد بررسی قرار میدهد و اینکه چطور این شجره نامه ها نقش نژاد پرستی را در شکل گیری این شخصیت نوروزی مبهم میکنند

***

سیاهی به عنوان نشانگر مشخصی در تاریخ برده داری و نژاد در ایران به کار میرود. در طول قرن ها واژه ی *سیاه* بسط یا تخفیف یافته تا گروه های مختلفی از مردم را شامل شود. در دوران صفویه، سیاه به مردم آسیای جنوبی، به طور خاص خواجه گان به بردگی گرفته شده، اشاره داشت.[۶] < https://csalateral.org/forum-cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana-myths-haji-firuz-racist-contours-iranian-minstrel-baghoolizadeh-fa/#fn-6> در اواخر قرن نوزدهم، سیاه به مردم آفریقای شرقی که توسط ایرانیان مرفه و سلطنتی به بردگی گرفته شده بودند اشاره داشت. در حالی که قبل تر، جوامع دیگری از جمله قفقازی ها، مردم آسیای میانه و آسیای جنوبی تحت بردگی قرار گرفته بودند، تغییرات ژئوپولتیکی مردم آفریقای شرقی را آسیب پذیر تر کرد، بدین گونه سیستم برده داری ایران را تا جایی نژادپرستانه میکند که تقریبا هر کسی که "سیاه" خطاب میشد به احتمال زیاد برده بود

قراردادهایی که نوید خاتمه بخشیدن به تجارت برده ی خلیج فارس را میدادند بارها منعقد و فسخ میشدند تا اینکه در سال ۱۹۲۹ میلادی (۱۳۰۸ شمسی)، کابینه ی رضا شاه فرمان لغو برده داری را صادر کرد تا در صحنه ی بین المللی مدرن و غربی ظاهر شود. بدین ترتیب، هر گونه اشاره به بردگی گرفتن مردم از فضاهای عمومی حذف شد. هنگامی که شاه افسانه ی آریایی بودن را تایید و پذیرفت،[۷] افسانه ای که مدعی بود که ایرانیان وارثان میراث نژادی سفید باستان هستند،[۸] مردم آزاد شده، که اکثرا از نژاد آفریقایی بودند نیز حذف شدند. اما استثنای بزرگ این حذف ها به سیاه بازی وارد شد، نمایش های تخت حوضی سیاه چهره ای که مردم برده را مسخره میکرد. با کمرنگ شدن حافظه جمعی و تابو شدن ایده برده داری ایرانی، این نمایش ها محبوبیت بیشتری پیدا کردند و توضیحات دیگری برای توجیه و حفظ آنها پدیدار شد

اجراهای "سیاه بازی" در اواخر قرن نوزدهم در دربار قاجار شکل گرفت. دوباره واژه ی سیاه تغییر پیدا کرد، حالابه شخصیتی اشاره دارد که با صورت سیاه روی صحنه ظاهر میشود. این نمایش ها معمولا در دربار یا محافل اعیان و در تمام طول سال اجرا میشد که انتقادات اجتماعی گسترده را به زندگی روزمره مخاطبان مرتبط میکرد.[۹] این نمایش ها، شبیه تئاتر دلقک سیاه چهره ("تئاتر دلقک سیاه چهره" ژانری از تئاتر است که شامل تمسخر مردم سیاه پوست میشود که نه تنها در ایالات متحده و اروپا، بلکه در خاورمیانه هم اجرا میشود) در ایالات متحده، به مضراب و اشکال دیگر کمدی، از طریق موسیقی، آواز، رقص و همینطور جکهایی که مبتنی بر سوتفاهم و برقراری نادرست ارتباطند متکی هستند. در دوران پهلوی، سیاه بازی از نمایش درباری که برای خانواده سلطنتی اجرا میشد، به نمایشی تبدیل شد که در خیابان ها و تئاتر های مراکز عمده شهری در سراسر ایران دیده میشد

البته میراث برده داری در سیاه بازی بسیار خاص است. در حالی که نخبگان و ثروتمندان ایرانی زنان، مردان و خواجگان را به بردگی گرفته بودند، سیاه بازی کاریکاتورهای خواجگان را مورد هدف قرار داد. خواجه گان به عنوان نگهبان حرمسرا خدمت میکردند و به عنوان محرمان، مدیران معتمد امورات روزمره دربار بودند. خواجه گان عالی رتبه قدرت بیشتری نسبت به بسیاری از اعضای آزاد دربار داشتند.[۱۰] شناخته شدن آنها به شکل بیش از حد جنسی یا بدون جنسیت – به عنوان مردانی که نیاز بود اخته شوند تا بتوانند آزادانه و بدون بد گمانی با زنان دربار تعامل کنند – یک موضوع اصلی در سیاه بازی است. حتی نام شخصیت های سیاه اغلب مبارک یا حاجی فیروز، از نام های محبوب بردگان در ایران و منطقه خلیج فارس گرفته شده است.[۱۱]

با اینحال، نمایش موضوع اصلی سیاه بازی – یک ساده لوح مستعد اشتباهات – با تصویر خواجه، به مخاطب یادآوری میکند که هر چقدر هم که خواجه قدرت داشته باشد، همچنان یک برده است و به عنوان برده در برابر بدنامی آسیب پذیر است. سیاه در سیاه بازی با صدایی با فرکانس بالا (زیر) صحبت میکند، فارسی اش لهجه دارد، به ارباب خود نزدیک است، امورات اربابش را مدیریت میکند و غیره. او اغلب هوس باز است اما یار درخوری نیست.[۱۲] به طور خلاصه، سیاه مستقیما از کلیشه های خام در مورد خواجه گان در عصر قاجار گرفته شده است

حاجی فیروز از سیاه بازی برآمد و محبوبیتش به رشد این اجراها در دهه های ۱۹۲۰ و ۱۹۳۰ میلادی (۱۳۰۰ و ۱۳۱۰ شمسی) در تهران گره خورده است.[۱۳] در حالی که سیاه بازی در محدوده کلی خود باقی ماند، حاجی فیروز با سال نو پیوند خورد.[۱۴] ظاهر قابل توجه و طنین زنگ صدایش او را به یک وسیله قابل شناسایی در جشن های نوروز تبدیل کرد. از آنجایی که شاهان پهلوی خود را به عنوان وارثان ایران باستان معرفی میکردند، ملی گرایان ایرانی تلاش کردند تا مثال هایی از تئاتر "مردمی" که به اسلام ارتباطی ندارد را به عنوان گواهی بر عمق فرهنگ عامه بیابند.[۱۵] سیاه بازی به عنوان یک ژانر تئاتر برای خودش شناخته شد و بازیگرانی مثل سعدی افشار تمام حرفه ی خود را حول شخصیت سیاه بنا کردند و به شهرت ملی دست یافتند.[۱۶]

جنبش مردمی دفاع از حاجی فیروز، بعد از انقلاب برجسته شد. در حالی که برخی روایات در دوران پهلوی شکل گرفته بود، آنها در واکنش به جمهوری اسلامی و کنترلش بر فرهنگ عمومی ایران مرسوم تر و تند تر شدند. آیت الله خمینی به متهم کردن ایالات متحده امریکا به مظهر بی عدالتی، از جمله نژادپرستی، شهرت داشت[۱۷] و جمهوری اسلامی خود را به شکل رهبر جنبش های ضد امپریالیستی برای جهان جنوب (جهان سوم) درآورد. اما سیاه بازی شهرت جمهوری اسلامی را به عنوان یک نیروی بین المللی ضد نژادپرستی به خطر انداخت، چراکه غیر ایرانی ها بدون شک آن را به عنوان سیاه چهره خواهند شناخت. برای کاهش این مساله، مقامات دولتی سیاه بازی را در سالهای اولیه جمهوری اسلامی سرکوب کردند. برخی از بازیگران تئاتر سیاه بازی به نمایش های خود ادامه دادند اما از رنگ کردن صورت خود اجتناب کردند. حاجی فیروز ها معمولا توبیخ و گاها دستگیر میشدند. از آنجا که جمهوری اسلامی اشکال خاصی از موسیقی و رقص در ملا عام را هم به دلایل مذهبی ممنوع کرده بود، بسیاری از افراد سیاست های جدید را به عنوان "ضدیت با خوشحالی" دیدند و قادر به > رفع دلایل نژادی نبودند که باعث میشد ممنوعیت حاجی فیروز متفاوت از دلایل مربوط به کنترل موسیقی باشد.[۱۸] به دلیل ارتباط او با نوروز، <https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-admin/post.php?post=9145&action=edit#fn-18> جشنهای مربوط به قبل از اسلام، دفاع از حاجی فیروز، برای کسانی که احساس میکردند در مقابل جمهوری اسلامی قرار دارند، اهمیت ویژه ای پیدا کرد

از آنجا که این تغییرات سیاسی وجود حاجی فیروز را تهدید میکرد، کسانی که از او دفاع میکردند توضیحات چندگانه ای را ارائه دادند. برخی چهره سیاه او را به دوده ناشی از آتش سوزی های چهارشنبه سوری نسبت دادند که ایرانیان در آخرین سه شنبه ی سال از روی آن میپرند، در حالی که دیگران اظهار داشتند که حاجی فیروز در واقع موبد زرتشتی ای بوده است که صورتش از نزدیک شدن به آتش مقدس سیاه شده. با این حال، من هرگز به روایتی برنخورده ام که کسی به دلیل از روی آتش پریدن چهره اش سیاه شده باشد، و همچنین ایده ی اینکه حاجی فیروز یک موبد زرتشتی بوده با عقاید زرتشتیان در مورد پاکی و پاکیزگی جور در نمی آید. در هر دو مورد، در توضیحات مثال هایی ذکر شده است که در ایران بومی یا باستانی شناخته میشود و استدلالات غیر منطقی ای آورده میشود تا آنها را به حاجی فیروز به عنوان بخشی از میراث فرهنگی جمعی متصل کند

با این حال، به تدریج توضیحات پیچیده تری هم شکل گرفت، تا جایی که برخی او را حلول روح سیاوش، شخصیتی در شاهنامه فردوسی توصیف کردند. شاهنامه، حماسه ای از قرن دهم، در میان ملی گرایان که آن را پاسدار گذشته و فرهنگ ناب ایرانی پیش از اسلام میدانستند در قرن بیستم اهمیت یافت. شاهنامه سیاوش را به عنوان یک شاهزاده جوانمرد و باوقار معرفی میکند. نام او سیا-وش، در اصل سیا-وخش، در اصل به اسب سیاه او اشاره دارد.[۱۹] با گذشت زمان، تلفظ سیاوخش نادر شد که به مدافعان حاجی فیروز در قرن بیستم این اجازه را میداد که او را به "ظاهر سیاه" تفسیر کنند که با توجیهاتشان سازگار شود. این با ریشه شناسی های پیشامدرن نام همسو نیست، و در شاهنامه هیچ اشاره ای به اینکه او سیاهپوست یا شوخ بوده نیست.[۲۰] با این حال، در سال ۱۹۸۳ میلادی (۱۳۶۲ شمسی)، مهرداد بهار حاجی فیروز را به سیاوش، خدایان بین النهرین و آیین های زندگی پس از مرگ مرتبط نمود. بهار حاجی فیروز را سیاوش برخاسته از مرگ، با صورت سیاه شده یی خاکستری، بازگشته به دنیای زنده توصیف میکند.[۲۱] توصیفات بهار، هر گونه پیوند مستقیم بین شخصیت حاجی فیروز و کاریکاتور بردگان آفریقایی در دربار قاجار را نادیده میگیرد. او همچنین اشاره ای هم به این نکرده است که چرا یک شاهزاده ی احیا شده فارسی دست و پا شکسته حرف میزند و اصطلاحات رعیتی مثل صدا کردن ارباب خود را به کار میبرد. در عوض بهار روایت هایی که در دوران پهلوی شکل گرفته بود را تکرار کرد، حذف هر گونه اشاره به بردگی یا نژاد، و توضیحی را ارائه کرد که حضور حاجی فیروز را در جشن های نوروزی توجیه میکند و وجودش را به یک سرمایه فرهنگی که به خاطر تاریخ باید حفظ شود نشان داد. ربط دادن حاجی فیروز به عناصر ایران پیش از اسلام، چه از طریق ایده های تحریف شده زرتشتی یا اشتباه تعبیر کردن شخصیت های شاهنامه، حاجی فیروز را به عنوان یک شخصیت فرهنگی که وجودش توسط یک حکومت اسلامی تندرو تهدید شده است نشان میدهد

همزمان، تمثال های مادی حاجی فیروز و جادادن تصویرش در سنت های نوروزی بیشتر رایج شد. از عروسک های نخی حاجی فیروز که توسط بیماران نابینا ساخته شده بود تا برای بنیاد کهریزک پول جمع کنند، تا کارتهای تبریک حاجی فیروز که دایره زنگی اش را میزد، حاجی فیروز به طور مداوم با لباس قرمز، کلاه گرد و چهره ی سیاه شده به تصویر کشیده شده

است.[۲۲] تمام این نمایانگرهای مادی به یک صورت سیاه شده متکی هستند تا به صورت بصری نشان دهند که این کالا حاجی فیروز است. یک عروسک یا تصویر بدون صورت سیاه ممکن است حتی به عنوان یک حاجی فیروز شناخته نشود، و احتمالا با یک عروسک که لباس قرمز پوشیده اشتباه گرفته شود. البته اهمیت صورت سیاه شده در اجرای زنده کم میشود، چرا که سایر ویژگی ها مثل لهجه یا طرز رفتار میتوانند کاریکاتور نژادی را در غیاب صورت سیاه به مخاطب نشان دهد

من در سال ۲۰۱۵ میلادی (۱۳۹۴ شمسی)، با جواد انصافی، بازیگر سیاه بازی در تئاتر محراب تهران ملاقات کردم. انصافی که از دهه ۱۹۷۰ میلادی (۱۳۵۰ شمسی) در رادیو، تلویزیون، فیلم ها و روی صحنه اجرا کرده است، قبل از حضور در صحنه ی نمایش چله زری و عمو چله جون، در مورد تجربیاتش در تئاتر با من صحبت کرد. انصافی من را به اتاق گریم راهنمایی کرد تا در مورد سیاه بازی، تاریخچه ی آن و تجربیاتش صحبت کنیم.[۲۳] همسرش، فروغ یزدان عاشوری هم که در نمایش آن شب اجرا داشت به گفتگو پیوست

انصافی بحث را با ریشه های باستانی این ژانر آغاز کرد، که به گفته ی او به دوره ی پیش از اسلام در سنگ نگاره هایی که زندگی درباریان را نشان میداد بازمیگشت. وی گفت: "همیشه دلقکی وجود دارد، و این همانجایی است که سیاه از آنجا می آید". اما سنگ نگاره ها رنگی نیستند، پس از او در مورد اینکه چهره سیاه از کجا می آید بیشتر پرسیدم. انصافی صورت سیاه را به عنوان جزییات حاشیه ای توصیف کرد، شیوه ای تصویری که خنده دارترین شخصیت روی صحنه را برجسته میکند. او در مورد حاجی فیروز هم همین استدلال را مطرح کرد: "نیازی نیست که حاجی فیروز صورت سیاه داشته باشد." در واقع در سالهای اخیر، انصافی در نقش حاجی فیروز با لباس قرمز، بدون چهره ی سیاه شده در تلویزیون ظاهر شده است. با این حال، کتاب انصافی در مورد سنت های نوروزی شامل شرح زیر است

در بعضی شهرها از جمله تهران در نزدیکی نوروز دو نفر یکی سیاه (حاجی فیروز) و یکی پیرمرد (عمو نوروز) می " آمدند و میخواندند و با جملات حالت نمایشی نیز بازی میکردند که باعث شادی و خنده مردم میشد.[۲۴]

اگرچه انصافی اظهار داشت که حاجی فیروز به چهره سیاه شده نیازی ندارد، نوشته های خودش تاکید دارد که سیاهی عنصر تعیین کننده ی شخصیت اوست

توصیف انصافی از حاجی فیروز، که نیازی به چهره ی سیاه شده نیست، را میتوان به عنوان تلاشی معنادار برای حفظ این شخصیت در برابر ضدیت دولت فهمید.[۲۵] انصافی که در چند دهه گذشته به عنوان یک سیاه بازی کرده است، به یاد می آورد که مقامات مختلف دولتی از بخش های مختلف، در دوران اوایل جمهوری اسلامی، نزد او رفتند و از او خواستند – یا شاید به طور جدی پیشنهاد دادند – که او چهره اش را برای اجرای نمایش هایش سیاه نکند. به این ترتیب، او سیاه کردن چهره اش را در نقش های تلویزیون دولتی کنار گذاشت.[۲۶] نقش او به عنوان سیاه، نسبتا بدون تغییر باقی ماند. "من میگویم شما نمیخواهید که چهره ی سیاه شده داشته باشم؟ خوب، این چیزی از بقیه نمایش تغییر نمیدهد."[۲۷] در واقع تئاتر دلقک سیاه چهره، به چیزهایی بیشتر از فقط سیاه کردن صورت یک نفر نیاز دارد. در اجرای آن شب، انصافی یا چهره ی بدون گریم و با حفظ عناصر دیگری که شخصیت او را متمایز میکند – لباس قرمز ساده، فارسی دست و پا شکسته اش، و طرز رفتار بدنش شروع کرد. تقریبا در نیمه های برنامه، وی با تشویق تماشاگران با روش تئاتری یه کرم سیاه به پوست خود زد.[۲۸] اگرچه بازیگری او بدون تغییر باقی ماند، آنطور که از تشویق بلندترشان، خنده های شدیدتر و ملموسشان مشهود بود، تماشاگران از نیمه دوم نمایش بسیار بیشتر استقبال کردند

شرکت انصافی در سیاه بازی همچنان یک پروژه پر شور است برای او و همسرش و همچنین پسرشان امیرحسین انصافی که او هم روی صحنه فعالیت میکند. قبل از اینکه مکالمه ام را با انصافی تمام کنم، یزدان عاشوری مرا به کناری کشید و در مورد دلیل علاقه مندی من به این موضوع پرسید. به او گفتم که در مورد سیاه بازی و مقایسه آن با تئاتر دلقک سیاه چهره در امریکا مینوشتم. او گفت: " اوه خوبه، شما میتوانید به همه بگویید تفاوت ما با آن چقدر است. همه مدام میگویند این نژاد پرستانه است، اما ما میگوییم نه، این سنت است.[۲۹]

دیگر دوستداران سیاه بازی و حاجی فیروز مواضع دولت را موضوعی نمی دانند که انگیزه آن تمایلات ضد نژادپرستانه باشد. در عوض آنها جمهوری اسلامی را به گونه ای میبینند که مانع سرگرمی های عامیانه ی ملت میشود. اگرچه لباس پوشیدن به عنوان حاجی فیروز در ایران غیر قانونی نیست، مقامات گاهی حاجی فیروز را با توجه به قوانین خلاف عرف عمومی دستگیر میکند، به ویژه اگردر حال اجرا – رقص، آواز و مانند آن- در فضاهای عمومی باشند. به این ترتیب، این دستگیری ها به صورت پراکنده انجام میشود و یکسان نیست. با این حال، آنها اغلب توسط طرفداران حاجی فیروز در اینترنت منتشر میشوند، جایی که این دستگیری ها به عنوان برخورد ناعادلانه بین یک سنت شاد و ساده در برابر یک دولت استبدادی توصیف میشود. به عنوان مثال، ایران گلوبال، یک رسانه آنلاین، تصویری از یک پلیس در حال دستگیری حاجی

فیروز را با عنوان زیر منتشر کرد: "بنابر گزارشات رسیده در شهر رشت یک حاجی فیروز...باعث شادی و خنده مردم شد، اما ماموران سرکوبگر رژیم به وی حمله کردند و او را دستگیر کردند."[۳۰] توضیح عکس حاجی فیروز را در نقش یک بی گناه نشان میدهد، که فقط میخواهد دیگران را خوشحال کند، نیتی که با حضور غالب جمهوری اسلامی در هم شکسته شده است

این موضع گیری مشترکی بود تا اینکه اخیرا که خواننده رپ ایرانی به نام هیچکس (سروش لشکری)، آهنگ "فیروز" را در سال ۲۰۱۵ میلادی (۱۳۹۳ شمسی) منتشر کرد



ملتفت، "فیروز"، مارچ ۲۰۱۵، ویدئو یوتیوب ۳:۳۲ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxkncQCpzzc <
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxkncQCpzzc>

به جای طرح مساله حاجی فیروز به عنوان یک جنگ فرهنگی با جمهوری اسلامی، لشکری به شرایط اقتصادی که مردم را به پوشیدن لباس حاجی فیروز و تاریخچه اصلی برده داری که رفتار شخصیت را شکل میدهد، اشاره کرد. در حالی که برخی اجراهای رسمی نوروزی شامل حاجی فیروز است، بیشتر حاجی فیروز ها به طور معمول مردان جوان تر با پشتوانه ی ضعیف اقتصادی-اجتماعی هستند که بین اتوموبیل های گیر کرده پشت چراغ های راهنمایی رانندگی یا بیرون در پیاده رو ها اجرا میکنند تا در فصل تعطیلات قدری پول بیشتر در بیاورند. متن شعر لشکری جوانی را توصیف میکند؛ نان آور خانواده، که با رئیسش در مورد وضعیت مالی خود صحبت کرده و فایده ای نداشته، کسی که نمیتواند هزینه هایش را پرداخت کند، کسی که همه ی تلاش هایش به بن بست رسیده، و چاره ای جز از دست دادن عزت خود ندارد که به عنوان یک حاجی فیروز در خیابان ها اجرا کند

لشکری با کنایه تندی ادامه میدهد: "برقص، برقص، برقص / بگیریم برده داری رو جشن" و "حتما طرفای آفریقا هر روزشون نوروزه / آخه اینجوری حساب بکنی پر حاجی فیروزه". او سپس یک سری سوالات را شروع میکند، از جمله اشاره میکند "اجداد ما از کجا خریدنت؟" رپ لشکری دو عنصر وجود حاجی فیروز را در ایران منعکس میکند. – اول اینکه حاجی فیروز ها آفریقایی هایی را که به زور به ایران آورده شده بودند را مسخره میکنند، و دوم اینکه این عمل اصولا به دلیل شرایط اقتصادی که کارگران کم درآمد را بدون پشتوانه میکند در ایران ادامه دارد. احساسات لشکری مانند مهدی اخوان ثالث است که در سال ۱۹۵۱ میلادی (۱۳۳۰ شمسی)، شرحی به یک شعر نوروزی نوشت که در آن او نفرت خود را از اجرای حاجی فیروز شرح داده است که از تهران و برای مسخره کردن بردگان از تهران پدیدار شده است. اخوان ثالث تشریح کرد که خصومتش نسب به کسانی که از گرسنگی مجبور به انجام این کار هستند نبوده، بلکه بیشتر به طور کلی به عنوان یک سنت است.[۳۱] در حالی که اخوان ثالث شکایات خود را در مجموعه نوشته هایش گم و گور کرد، آهنگ لشکری در ابعاد جهانی

صدا کرد، تقریبا بلافاصله بحث هایی را در شبکه های اجتماعی برانگیخت.[۳۲] برای طرفداران این سوال مطرح شد که آیا حاجی فیروز با بردگی ارتباط دارد، آیا حاجی فیروز بدون چهره ی سیاه شده هم همچنان میتواند حاجی فیروز باشد، و در مورد کل سنت چه باید کرد

سوال "حاجی فیروز کیست و از کجا آمده است؟" ما را به سمت هزاران توضیح پیچیده سوق میدهد، بسیاری تاریخ برده داری را به طور کلی پنهان یا نادیده میگیرند، که همه در تلاش برای مبرا کردن خود از لذت بردن از اجرای یک دلقک سیاه چهره هستند. شاید ما باید سوال را دوباره بنویسیم و بپرسیم: "حاجی فیروز کیست و چگونه او را رها کنیم؟" در نوروز غرفه ای را در پیک نیک سالانه نوروزی سیزده به در برپا کرد. مستقر در SWANA-LA_2019، یک سازمان فعال محلی به نام پارک میسون اروین، یکی از بزرگترین مراکز نوروزی که هزاران نفر از ایرانیان خارج نشین در جنوب کالیفرنیا در آن جشن تابلوهایی با عنوان "حاجی فیروز نژادپرستانه است" و "ما باید حاجی فیروز را کنار بگذاریم" SWANA-LA میگیرند، اعضای به فارسی و انگلیسی نصب کردند. در حالی که برخی از حاظران پیام آنها را میپذیرفتند، دیگران این فعالان را تهدید کردند، پوسترهایشان را پاره کردند و به آنها توهین کردند. در یک برخورد، یک مرد نسبتا مسن گریه کرد "چرا این کار را میکنید؟ من عاشق حاجی فیروز هستم، مرا خیلی خوشحال کرده، همه ی ما را خیلی خوشحال کرده است."[۳۳] آنها پاسخ دادند که خوشحالی شما نباید مبتنی بر یک کاریکاتور نژادپرستانه باشد، کار مهمی که برای برخی بیش از آنچه که باید سخت به نظر میرسد



ع میکند. عکس توسط نویسنده، میلادی (دی ماه ۱۳۹۴ شمسی

پانوشت

۱ نوروز "روز جدید"، مصادف با آغاز بهار و مصادف با اولین روز سال جدید است

۲ نژادپرستی) "Iranian Racism: Its History and Its Lingering Legacy," ،بیتا بقولی زاده ایرانی: تاریخش و میراث ماندگارش)، (کنفرانس بین المللی در مورد دیاسپورای ایرانی (اتحاد بین المللی در بیرون مرزها)، دانشگاه کالیفرنیا در لس آنجلس (یو سی ال ای)، ۲۰۱۲ میلادی ((۱۳۹۱ شمسی

< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-admin/post.php?post=9157&action=edit#fn-2-text>

۳ "حاجی فیروز کیست و از کجا آمده؟"

۴ این اشاره به گذشته زرتشتی عمیقا در ملی گرایی ایرانی نهفته است. آیین زرتشت مذهبی با عظمت در پیش از اسلام بود و همچنان توسط اقلیت دینی در ایران و سراسر جهان رواج دارد. در دوران پهلوی، آیین زرتشت از نظر ابراز ملی گرایی پهلوی مورد توجه قرار گرفت و همچنان Exile and the Nation: The Parsi ،در بین ملی گرایان محبوب است. افشین مرعشی تبعید و ملت: جامعه پارسی) Community of India and the Making of Modern Iran (هند و ساخت ایران مدرن)، (آستین، انتشارات دانشگاه تگزاس، ۲۰۲۰ میلادی

۵ وجود بدون تغییر حاجی فیروز – صورت سیاه، لباس قرمز، دایره زنگی و طنین صدای زنگ دار) از بازگو کردن برده داری و نژاد پرستی قرن نوزدهم و اوایل قرن بیستم ایران جدایی ناپذیر است. بیتا بقولی زاده، "Seeing Race and Erasing Slavery: Media and the Construction of Blackness in Iran, 1840–1960" "دیدن نژاد و محو کردن برده داری:" رسانه و ساخت سیاهی در ایران ۱۸۴۰ – ۱۹۶۰" (پایان نامه دکترا، دانشگاه پنسیلوانیا، ۲۰۱۸ میلادی) ۱۹۹-۲۰۴. انجلیتا ریس یک مطالعه تطبیقی درباره حاجی فیروز انجام داده است.. Angelita Reyes, "Perfomativity and Representation in Transnational Blackface: Mammy (USA), Zwarte Piet (Netherlands), and Haji Firuz (Iran). انجلیتا رییس، اجرا و نمایش درچهره سیاه فراملی: ممی (ایالت متحده آمریکا)، پیتر سیاه (هلند)، و حاجی فیروز (ایران). اقیانوس اطلس شناسی ۱۶، شماره ۴ (۲۰۱۹) ۵۲۱-۵۵۰

۶ اکثر خواجه گان از آسیای جنوبی بودند که در دربار صفوی "سیاه" بودند (۱۵۰۱-۱۷۳۶)، برخلاف خواجه گان قفقازی که "سفید" بودند. Sussan Babaie, Kathryn Babayan, Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, and Massumeh Farhad, Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran) بردگان شاه: نخبگان جدید ایران صفوی) (نیو یورک: ای بی تارس، ۲۰۰۴).
قبل از عصر صفویه، شاعرانی که به زبان فارسی می نوشتند، از لفظ سیاه برای اشاره به مردم آفریقای شرقی یا آسیای جنوبی استفاده میکردند، بسته به کلمات مرتبط یا موقعیت. شاعران برای اشاره به مردم آسیای جنوبی لفظ سیاه را با هندو همراه میکردند یا برای مردم آفریقای شرقی با زنگی. به هفت پیکار نظامی (قرن دوازدهم – سیزدهم) ، مثنوی مولوی (قرن سیزدهم) ، گنجور مراجعه کنید ، قابل دسترسی در ۱۵ آگوست ۲۰۲۰
https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/7peykar/sh5 < https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/7peykar/sh5>.

۷ دیدن نژاد و محو کردن برده داری)،) "Seeing Race and Erasing Slavery," ،بقولی زاده ۱۶۴-۲۰۶، گذار از طیف متنوعی از مردم برده، به تقریبا به طور انحصاری مردم آفریقای شرقی، همراه با ظهور آریائیزم در میان ملی گرایان ایرانی که از اواخر قرن نوزدهم آغاز شد، اواخر قرن نوزدهم، ایرانیان خود را نه سفید. دوگانه ی سیاه و سفیدی را ایجاد کرد. پیش از و نه سیاه میدیدند

۸ برای بحثی در مورد ایدئولوژی های پیرامون افسانه ی آریایی، در قرن نوزدهم و اوایل قرن بیستم، رجوع کنید به Reza Zia Ebrahimi, The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation) ظهور ناسیونالیسم ایرانی، نژاد و سیاست تغییر) (مکان) (نیو یورک، چاپ دانشگاه کولامبیا، ۲۰۱۶

۹ Maziar Shirazi، "A Review of Tarabnameh, or, Why Are Iranian-Americans Laughing at Blackface in 2016?" برای بحث مختصری در مورد تئاتر سیاه بازی، رجوع کنید به مروری بر طرب نامه یا چرا ایرانی آمریکایی ها در سال ۲۰۱۶ به سیاه چهره (میخندند؟). Ajam Media Collective, December 7, 2016, https://ajammc.com/2016/12/07/why-are-iranian-americans-laughing-at-

blackface-in-2016 < https://ajammc.com/2016/12/07/why-are-iranian-americans-laughing-at-blackface-in-2016> .

۱۰ این برای هر دو گروه خواجه گان آفریقای شرقی یا قفقازی صدق میکند. برای مثال هایی از دربار قاجار رجوع کنید به احمد ابن فتح علی عضد الدوله، تاریخ عضدی، در شرح حالت زوجات و بنین و بنات خاقان (چاپ بمبایی، ۱۲۶۶)؛ دوست علی خان، معیرالممالک، خاطرات ناصرالدین شاه، (تهران: نقش جهان)، ۱۸: اعتماد السلطنه، روزنامه خاطرات اعتماد السلطنه، (تهران: امیرکبیر، ۱۳۸۹) ۵۲۶-۵۲۷

۱۱ خواجه ای به نام حاجی فیروز در دربار ناصرالدین شاه (حدود ۱۲۲۷ – ۱۲۷۵ شمسی) به عنوان خواجه خدمت کرد. بقولی زاده دیدن نژاد" "Seeing Race and Erasing Slavery," و محو کردن برده داری"، ۸۴. جستجوی فیروز یا مبارک در مطالب کتابخانه دیجیتال انگلیسی قطر اسامی معمول مردان برده در سراسر منطقه خلیج فارس در قرن نوزدهم از موارد برده داری III جمله ایران را نشان میدهد. برای مثال رجوع کنید به فایل های 5/191 تجارت برده، نامه نگاری با بوشهر در مورد برده ها و تقاضانامه ها و ،A/2 II فردی. فایل های گواهی های آزادسازی شان، کتابخانه دیجیتال قطر، تاریخ دسترسی ۱ آگوست ۲۰۲۰ میلادی qdl.qa،

۱۲ برای یک تاریخچه عکاسی از اینکه چگونه پرتره های خواجه گان، الهام بخش نقالان و دلقکان Seeing Race and Erasing ،در سال های ۱۲۷۵ و ۱۲۸۵ شد، رجوع کنید به بقولی زاده دیدن نژاد و محو کردن برده داری) ۶۷-۱۱۴)" "Slavery,"

۱۳ سعدی افشار، آنطور که برای لاله علم نقل شده است، عالیجناب سیاه: زندگی و خاطرات سعدی افشار (تهران: پوینده، ۲۰۱۲)، ۴۷-۴۸

۱۴ عروسک های حاجی فیروز نشان میدهد که این شخصیت در دهه های ۱۹۶۰ و ۱۹۷۰ میلادی ۱۳۴۰) .(Poupée de chiffon, tunique de soie artificielle," Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac," و ۱۳۵۰ شمسی) فراتر از نمایش های ساده خیابانی گسترش یافته بود عروسک پارچه، لباس ابریشم مصنوعی)، موزه کوای برانلی – ژاک شیراک)، تاریخ دسترسی ۴ فوریه ۲۰۱۹، http://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/explorer-les-collections/base/Work/action/show/notice/799998-poupee-de-chiffon-tunique-de-soie-artificielle/page/1 < http://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/explorer-les-collections/base/Work/action/show/notice/799998-poupee-de-chiffon-tunique-de-soie-artificielle/page/1> ، Poupée représentant un danseur," Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac (عروسک نشان دهنده رقصنده، موزه کوای ،برانلی، ژاک شیراک)، دهه ۱۹۶۰، تاریخ دسترسی ۴ فوریه ۲۰۱۹ http://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/explorer-les-collections/base/Work/action/show/notice/73391-poupee-representant-un-danseur/page/1 < http://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/explorer-les-collections/base/Work/action/show/notice/73391-poupee-representant-un-danseur/page/1> که مرا از این عروسک ها Mira Xenia Schwerda با تشکر فراوان از ، مطلع کرد

۱۵ نمایش های تعزیه و دسته های عاشورا اشکال قدیمی تر تئاتر در ایران هستند، اما به دلیل اهمیت مذهبی شان، مثل حاجی فیروز یا سیاه بازی، در مجموعه ملی ثبت نشده اند. رجوع کنید به کامران آقایی، The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran شهدای کربلا: نمادها و آیین های شیعی در ایران مدرن (سیاتل، انتشارات دانشگاه واشنگتن، ۲۰۱۵) و The Women of Karbala: Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi'i Islam، زنان کربلا: اجرای آیینی و گفتمان های) نمادین در اسلام شیعه مدرن) آستین، انتشارات دانشگاه تگزاس، ۲۰۰۵ .William O. ویلیام بیمن، سنت های اجرای ایرانی، (کستا Beeman, Iranian Performance Traditions (میسا: چاپ مازدا، ۲۰۱۱). Kelsey Rice, "Emissaries of Enlightenment: Azeri کلسی رایس، فرستادگان روشنگری: گروه Theater Troupes in Iran and Central Asia, های تئاتر آذری در ایران و آسیای میانه۱۹۰۶-۱۹۴۴ ، ایران شناسی، ۲۰۲۰

۱۶ افشار، عالیجناب سیاه: زندگی و خاطرات سعدی افشار.

۱۷ خمینی در آبان ماه ۱۳۴۳ شمسی تبعید شد و در بهمن ماه ۱۳۵۷ به ایران بازگشت. وی از نجف و پاریس سخنرانی میکرد و در آنجا حکومت شاه را به ایالات متحده مرتبط اعلام میکرد

تا زمانی که برای انقلاب به ایران بازگشت. اروند آبراهامیان، ایران بین دو انقلاب (پرینستون، انتشارات دانشگاه پرینستون، ۱۹۸۲) ۴۴۵، ۴۶۱

۱۸ احساسات منفی در مورد این سیاست ها فراتر از مقررات مربوط به حاجی فیروز رفت. ناهید صیام دوست در مورد تغییراتی که در دامنه وسیع مقررات موسیقی پس از انقلاب اسلامی انجام شده است بحث میکند. Nahid Siamdoust, Soundtrack of the Revolution: ناهید صیام دوست، موسیقی متن انقلاب: سیاست های The Politics of Music in Iran، (موسیقی در ایران، (پالو آلتو: انتشارات دانشگاه استنفرد، ۲۰۱۷

۱۹ از لغت اوستایی گرفته شده برای "کسی که Siiāuuaršan" شکل اصلی سیاوش "سیااورسان کیانیان،)"KAYĀNIĀN vi. Siiāuuaršan, Siyāwaxš, Siāvaš," ".اسب نر سیاه دارد تاریخ ،(Encyclopaedia Iranica) سیااورسان،سیاوش، سیاوخش)، دابره المعارف ایرانیکا ،دسترسی در ۱۵ آوریل ۲۰۲۰ https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kayanian-vi < https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kayanian-vi> .

۲۰ پادشاهان)،. رجوع کنید به جلال خالقی مطلق، ابو قاسم فردوسی: شاهنامه (کتاب نیویورک، SUNY، ۲۰۰۷ انتشارات

۲۱ قابل دسترسی ،, XI/5, ۵۵۱۰۵۵۲ ،محمود امید سالار، "حاجی فیروز". دایره المعارف ایرانیکا ،در ۳۰ دسامبر ۲۰۱۲ http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haji-firuz < http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haji-firuz> .

۲۲ مجموعه نویسنده، از ۱۳۷۳ – ۱۳۹۴

۲۳ با تشکر فراوان از علی کارجو-راوری برای ملحق شدن به من

۲۴ جواد انصافی، نوید بهار: نمایش سیاه بازی نوروز و پیروز (تهران، چاپ مهرنگ، ۱۳۹۲)، ۳۳. ترجمه توسط نویسنده

۲۵ ممکن است مورد توجه قرار گرفته باشد که تکیه کلی به چهره سیاه مثل عروسک ها یا تصاویر با اجراهای انسانی نیاز نیست. به جایش، بازیگری فرد میتواند مخاطب را متوجه این کند که او یک سیاه است و نه یک شخص معمولی در لباس قرمز

۲۶ اگرچه انصافی اخیرا در استفاده از صورت سیاه روی صحنه آزادی بیشتری داشته است، برنامه های تلویزیون دولتی به طور کلی از آن اجتناب میکنند

۲۷ گفتگو با جواد انصافی، تئاتر محراب، تهران، ۳۰ دسامبر ۲۰۱۵ میلادی (۹ دی ماه ۱۳۹۴ (شمسی

۲۸ چله زری و عمو چله جون (شب یلدا)"، تئاتر محراب، تهران، ۳۰ دسامبر ۲۰۱۵ میلادی (۹" (دی ماه ۱۳۹۴ شمسی

۲۹ گفتگو با فروغ یزدان عاشوری، تئاتر محراب، تهران، ۳۰ دسامبر ۲۰۱۵ میلادی (۹ دی ماه (۱۳۹۴ شمسی

۳۰ دستگیری یک حاجی فیروز در رشت + عکس" ، ایران گلوبال ، ۱۳ مارچ ۲۰۱۳ میلادی (۲۳" ،(اسفند ۱۳۹۱ شمسی https://iranglobal.info/node/17066 < https://iranglobal.info/node/17066>

۳۱ Seeing" ،مهدی اخوان ثالث، ارغنون: مجموعه شعر (تهران، مروارید، ۱۳۳۰)، بقولی زاده دیدن نژاد و محو کردن برده‌داری)، ۲۰۳) "Race and Erasing Slavery,

۳۲ ،(توییتر، ۱۶ مارچ ۲۰۱۵ میلادی (۲۵ اسفند ماه ۱۳۹۳ شمسی,@HichkasOfficial https://twitter.com/HichkasOfficial/status/578312152429293569 < https://twitter.com/HichkasOfficial/status/578312152429293569>

۳۳ اعضای "، @swanalosangeles ،پونه بهین،۱ آوریل ۲۰۱۹ ،SWANA-LA گفتگو با عضو

و سایر اعضای جامعه ...)، اینستاگرام، ۳ آوریل ۲۰۱۹ SWANA-LA
https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv0PPjpBLG2/?igshid=1i678q792tqrz <
https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv0PPjpBLG2/?igshid=1i678q792tqrz>

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An (Un)Marked Foreigner: Race-Making in Egyptian, Syrian, and German Popular Cultures

by Shayna Silverstein and Darci Sprengel | Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA), Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT This essay negotiates the critical tension between race as an analytic and social construct by examining how race becomes socialized in and through the production and presentation of Arab culture in two ethnographic case studies: how Syrian musicians negotiate musical multiculturalism as they integrate into German society and how independent musicians in Egypt navigate the racialized entanglements of national and international security logics that privilege Western foreigners. Both these case studies center the "foreigner" subject as one who embodies proximity to white power and delimits the boundaries of such power. We argue that the category of foreigner is thus a racialized construct that not only complicates the Black–white binary of race relations but strategically evades explicit discourses and practices of racecraft that are violent, discriminatory, and exclusionary. By provincializing critical race theory through the particularities of Arab lived experience, we illustrate how local social categories are entangled with historic legacies of empire and contemporary global logics of racialized difference while remaining sensitive to how conceptions of difference exceed Euro-American categories of race. Our work therefore directs attention towards alternative enactments of racialization within the Global South.

KEYWORDS anti-Blackness, Arabness, asylum, Egypt, foreigner, Germany, multiculturalism, music, race, Syria, white privilege

Critical debates on difference in Arab-majority societies tend to reinforce a silence around the concept of race, either as an analytic for understanding contemporary social life in the Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region or as a local set of practices, discourses, and subjectivities. This silence is arguably due to an anxiety around the projected unsuitability of race as a historical force and discursive construct, considered by many to be foreign to lived experience in the region—as well as anxieties about the ethics of appropriating the historically specific contexts for anti-Black racism that are particular to Western societies.[1] At the same time, recent work has appealed for studies situated in Arab-majority societies to engage with critical race theory, particularly but not limited to the construction of blackness, and to contribute to anthropological theorizing about race and ethnicity more generally. Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar propose that though racial ideologies and categories may be hidden or denied, their potential unmasking can reveal crucial roles in the constitution of difference in Arab-majority societies, including how race intersects with class, gender, ethnicity, nation, and religion.[2]

In this essay, we seek to negotiate this critical tension between race as an analytic and a social construct by looking at race-making processes and discourses in contemporary

Arab experiences. Racial constructions are often problematically predicated on an Euro-American binary of whiteness and Blackness that masks colorism and that essentializes whiteness and Blackness rather than situates these constructions in relation to specific temporal and geographic contingencies.[3] Discourses of race are further complicated in Arabic-speaking societies in which the term *al-ʿunṣūrriyya* (lit. racism) refers to a broad constellation of violent and unequal practices and structures that tend to blur the appearance of racism with that of discrimination. The latter is often based on ethnic or sectarian difference and arguably fails to explicitly address the perpetuation of anti-Black racism. To better distinguish the lived experience of racism from that of discrimination, we aim to situate *al-ʿunṣūrrīyya* in and across social categories, especially (non)whiteness and (non)Blackness, and in relation to nationality, ethnicity, and language.

This essay engages with the experiences of artists and cultural producers located in Egypt, and displaced Syrian musicians integrating into German society. We account for the ways that our interlocutors racialize others, often within the context of their "home" societies, as well as the ways they become racialized through encounters stemming from migration, travel, and other processes of mobility.[4] We foreground the tensions between colorism as a distinct racialized experience, Arabness as a particular ethnic construct, and, perhaps most significantly for our interlocutors' experiences, the cloaking of race by other categories of difference that emerge in part from European colonial legacies and in part from histories considered more indigenous to the region.[5] To this end, we historicize racialized difference in relation to empire-making and colonial processes that have and continue to impact the region while remaining sensitive to how conceptions of difference exceed these Euro-American categories.

We further recognize where, when, and how critical race studies has traveled in order to address the gaps, contradictions, and instabilities of what Jemima Pierre calls "racecraft," or "the contemporary legacy and impact of European empire making on . . . the design and enactment, practice, and politics of race making."[6] Approaching postcolonial spaces as invariably racialized, we ask whether and how racialized experiences shape and are shaped by cultural practices among our interlocutors in their Arab-majority countries of origin as well as the Arab-minority societies in which they dwell. One of the primary social categories that emerges in our consideration of race-making discourses and practices is that of foreignness, which we approach as a racialized process of exclusion and/or privilege. Fatima El Tayeb argues, in the context of Afro-Deutsch experiences in twentieth-century Germany, that when difference is constituted as foreign, it often reinforces taboos on race in public discourse.[7] As a result, "pseudo-scientific, biologist theories [of race] that originated in the late nineteenth century" persist, perpetuating understandings of race as natural form rather than social construct.[8] Through ethnographic case studies of cultural practices in Egypt, Syria, and, more recently, Germany, we explore the effects of this silence, including in the ways the designation of foreigner grants some communities exceptional privilege while for others it serves as the basis for a naturalized form of citizenship that perpetuates the borders of racial governance.[9] Our work therefore interrogates the colonial geographies and histories of racecraft, resituating race-making in contemporary global relations of power and directing attention towards alternative enactments of racialization within the Global South.

Our two case studies engage with racialized experiences of Arab difference in contemporary cultural practices with a focus on the structural forces that shape these experiences. Shayna Silverstein draws on fieldwork conducted in Berlin to examine how displaced Syrian musicians strategically position themselves and their repertoire within the

broader discursive politics of multiculturalism and German national culture. Focusing on *MultiKulti* music-making as a space in which Syrian musicians are perceived as "white" and "foreign," she argues that social actors strategically (dis)identify with the racialized and enculturated subject-positions that constitute Syrianness. Importantly, they draw on their lived experience of multiculturalism within modern Syria to navigate these as strategic essentialisms and reconfigure Syrianness. Darci Sprengel's examination of independent music in contemporary Egypt demonstrates how the Egyptian state's logics of security intertwine with and reinforce global securitization practices in ways that privilege certain Western foreigners. She suggests that "security" is a global and local logic of racecraft and questions how the privileging of "the foreigner" (*al-agnabī*) intersects with historical prejudices against Africans and those with dark skin in Egypt, as well as perpetuates global logics privileging whiteness. Together, these ethnographic case studies center the "foreigner" subject as one who embodies proximity to white power and delimits the boundaries of such power. We argue that the category of foreigner is a racialized construct that not only complicates the Black-white binary of race relations but strategically evades explicit discourses and practices of racecraft that are violent, discriminatory, and exclusionary. By provincializing critical race theory through the particularities of Arab lived experience, we illustrate how local social categories are entangled with historic legacies of empire and global logics of racialized difference, and argue that race becomes socialized in and through the production and presentation of Arab culture.

Generally, popular culture and musical expression are central to making visible, tangible, and public otherwise hidden or marginalized ideas, discourses, and experiences. Musical practices are particularly well-situated to address the question of race not only because music is often an embodied experience, but because of how embodiment is complicated by race.[10] Though artists are often privileged in their mobility to travel, whether physically across political borders or through the circulation of recorded sound, as Sprengel details, it is also through the political economy of music production, which necessitates travel due to the paucity of local opportunities and resources, that racialized borders are strictly and violently enforced. Furthermore, cultural imaginaries more often than not realize values of socio-cultural inclusion, particularly through the rhetoric of multiculturalism, as Silverstein discusses. Despite some recognition among Arab studies scholars of how global and transnational cultural production are racialized processes,[11] there remains a general ambivalence in the field towards race in general. By untangling race from other local conceptions of difference, and by tracing how social actors variously privilege, reproduce, and (dis)identify with notions of race, we work through this ambivalence as it manifests in lived realities.

We likewise recognize the work that remains to be done in order to decenter European and North American formulations of race. More research is needed, for instance, to tackle the unique history and specificity of the concept of *al-ʿunṣūrrīyya* in the region as well as the question of how it might uphold anti-Black racism. Our interrogations here stem from our long-term ethnographic engagement with interlocutors in the region that, although previously not focused explicitly on race, made obvious the extent to which race and racialization are crucial aspects of contemporary lived experience. Oftentimes, our own positionalities as female, non-Arab, US-trained ethnographers refocused our attention on race in unanticipated ways as we navigated the local realities of daily life in relation to our interlocutors. We thus offer the following as preliminary engagements that only begin to untangle the complex relations between racism, discrimination, colorism, and Arabness in the SWANA region and beyond while we continue to develop more focused studies on

local meanings and processes of racialization beyond dominant Euro-American conceptions.

MultiKulti Music-Making in Syrian Berlin

"People make space for you if they like what you do," explains oud player and close friend Wassim Mukdad. Describing what draws him to musicking in Berlin, he continues, "I love the poetry of jam sessions, and all the 'MultiKulti,'" adding a hand gesture in reference to the particularities of multiculturalism in Berlin. "MultiKulti is part of Berlin's 'liberal extremism;' gender plays a part, too, and the hipsters. I feel comfortable and open here."[12] When Mukdad first arrived in Berlin in 2015, he began playing with the Babylon Orchestra, an intercultural ensemble launched as "a cultural response to the migration crisis" that "challenges ourselves" through "encounters with foreign cultures."[13] The Babylonian metaphor resonates in a landscape of fatigued metaphors for musical interculturalism. Berlin's intellectual elite have long imagined their city as an oasis for those in exile and turned to Babylon as a metonym for exile. With a core ensemble of approximately ten musicians and a larger network of performers who rotate in and out of performances, Babylon Orchestra musicians contribute repertoire through participatory processes of "multicultural exchange and dialogue" that fuse "oriental music with classical and jazz elements."[14] The multicultural ethos of the orchestra is arguably premised on a culturalist binary of "Oriental" and "Occidental" forms by which musicians purportedly contrast "ourselves" with "foreign cultures," a vague gesture of self and Other that reveals the unmarked status of whiteness in German.

The Babylon Orchestra is indicative of the ways that multiculturalism as a strategic tactic is leveraged through music performance and production. MultiKulti music-making in Berlin thrives as a mode of labor, marketing strategy, and intercultural aesthetics that aims to incorporate immigrants into Germany. The inclusion of Syrians in cultural projects, for instance, challenges Islamophobic discourse that portrays Middle Eastern asylum seekers as either male terrorists who pose an external threat to German society or female victims of religious oppression. Instead, MultiKulti discourse celebrates Middle Eastern artists as exceptional subjects whose artistic contributions purportedly transcend gendered conditions of domination and oppression in their societies of origin. Yet because MultiKulti music-making produces and constructs difference, it is complicit in masking systems of discrimination grounded in racial, ethnic, and religious divisions. Moreover, discourses on discrimination tend to not tackle race, instead slipping past structures of anti-blackness in the course of constructing foreignness.[15] MultiKulti music-making is therefore a rich site for exploring the main question of this essay, that is, the absence of race and colorism as discursive categories in contexts of discrimination in which Otherness is marked as foreign. Here, I compare and contrast German MultiKulti production with Syrian modes of multiculturalism in order to tease out the politics of racecraft in the production of musical difference as foreign.

Though the presence of Syrian musicians for German audiences of MultiKulti music-making was perceived as foreign, multiculturalism itself was not new terrain for Syrian musicians, many of whom had strategically negotiated the politics of musical diversity during their performing careers in Syria. The Syrian state actively promoted cultural diversity and tolerance through increased arts programming in the late 2000s. From folk festivals that celebrate internal differences in the name of national unity, to the invocation

of the "mosaic" as a metaphor for cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity across the Syrian nation, national imaginaries have historically been premised on the recognition of religious, ethnic, and geo-cultural heterogeneity within Syria's boundaries. The neoliberal reform of the late 2000s reasserted these forms of difference as a driver for individual opportunities and freedoms.

Like multiculturalism elsewhere, Syrian policies of multiculturalism tend to mask discrimination, which more often than not occurs along sectarian lines. Consider, briefly, the appeal of Joussour (lit. bridges), a music ensemble founded by Salah Ammo in 2007 in prewar Syria. Composed of musicians from Arab, Kurdish, Armenian, and Syriac Christian backgrounds, each bring to the ensemble their musical traditions and repertoire, moving fluidly across folkloric, contemporary, instrumental, and vocal genres in order to stage musical multiculturalism. Yet their concerts harbor risk. The expression of Kurdish culture is generally repressed within Syria because the regime considers Kurdish political autonomy a perpetual threat to the security of the regime.[16] Despite or likely because of these precarious conditions, Joussour vaults Kurdish performance culture to the stage. Joussour works strategically in tandem with cultural and political institutions, who sanction this celebration of an ethnic and linguistic minority that is actively discriminated against and persecuted by the state. Joussour exemplifies the risks and dangers of multiculturalism—that cultural diversity remains a rhetorical act that is dissonant yet contemporaneous with ethnic discrimination and persecution.

The perpetuation of difference between and among Syrians continually (re)constitutes a space structured by the cultural logics of empire, including racecraft.[17] Though difference in Syria is generally constituted along axes of religion, ethnicity, and locality, rather than race and color, the general tendency to project a certain social identity onto individuals and distribute or remove privileges and benefits based on that social identity reinforces what Yassin al-Haj Saleh racializes as the "white" and "Black" divide of Syrian sectarianism.[18] In his account of sectarianism and the Assadist regime, al-Haj Saleh draws on whiteness and Blackness not as lived social categories but as a discursive binary that maps hierarchies of power, wealth, and privilege onto "Western First World" (white) and "Eastern Third World" (Black) subject-positions that differentiate Syrians from each other. Though Al-Haj Saleh's racial framing of discrimination helpfully marks Orientalism and its internal effects within Syrian society, his efforts to link sectarianism to whiteness and Blackness through imported constructions of race, rather than local categories of difference, reinforces the untranslatability of anti-Black racism as lived experience. Nevertheless, racecraft continues to structure the ways that the state has historically tried to abate sectarianism in the public domain through its purported support of religious and ethnic minorities within the Syrian polity. Known as minoritarianism, this support legitimates the political domination of a particular minority group, the Alawite, and purportedly assures other minorities of protection against persecution.[19] In the broader context of minoritarianism and sectarianism, multiculturalism as a public expression of difference can be considered a thin rhetorical front that aspires towards diversity as national imaginary but in fact sustains the racialized dynamics of sectarianism, minoritarianism, and statecraft.

In Germany, the flaunting of difference as a constituent part of nation-building can be traced to at least the late 1990s, when young Black reggae and hip-hop artists gained visibility for works that expressed their experiences of belonging and alienation in Germany.[20] It is hardly a prescriptive category, but rather one which musicians, promoters, and audiences alike deploy to articulate a certain vision of German collectivism, a vision

grounded in debates on Germany identity, ethnicity, and nationalism that emerged in West Germany in the late 1970s.[21] These debates dovetailed concerns over national identity with long-standing issues of labor and immigration regarding the status of "guest workers," many of whom were Turkish migrant laborers. The binary distinction between foreigners and Germans that fueled these debates was and continues to be deeply entwined with the intellectual history of the concept of "*Volksgeist*" (lit. folk spirit), which can be traced to Johann Gottfried Herder's early theories of nationalism that foregrounded "*Kultur*" (culture, culturalism) as that which bound communities into an ethno-national collective. Multicultural policies in the 2000s generally embraced imaginaries of Germany as an immigration nation, in which citizenship is granted in terms of soil *and* blood. Multiculturalism birthed critics, however, not least of whom was, famously, German Chancellor Angela Merkel. In 2010 Merkel pronounced MultiKulti a failure, recognizing, as a head of state speaking to debates on immigration, that neighbors were *in fact not* living side-by-side with each other and enjoying each other's company.

These frictions have increased since 2015 as Syrians living in Germany are often visibly marked as non-German.[22] One young man from Eastern Syria commented resentfully about negative perceptions of his skin tone among white Germans in the small town in which he lived. He shared that he dresses sharply because "Germans treat me like I don't belong. It's as if there is something wrong with me . . . I have darker skin." Yet in contradistinction to his experience, many Syrian artists acknowledge that they benefit from the privilege of being perceived as "white," whether when spending leisure time in predominantly white German spaces or onstage at music events. Likewise, some non-Syrian immigrants feel that Syrians receive preferential treatment by Germans because they are perceived as white in comparison to Black immigrants.[23] Others disidentify with race as a marker of their Syrianness, arguing that public perceptions of Syrian difference are driven more by markers of religion (Islam), language, and place-based origin. Each of these ambivalent responses to whiteness, blackness, and racialized in-betweenness negotiates what El-Tayeb argues is a continental European discourse of normative whiteness and colorblindness that paradoxically refuses to see visible markers of racialized difference and yet situates these markers as external to Europeanness.[24]

These complex dynamics speak to the contradictions of *Willkommenskultur* ("welcoming culture"), a fleeting moment that lasted approximately two to three years, during which Germany received asylum seekers with attention to how Germany and Germans might benefit from the perspectives, assets, and skills of "newcomers" rather than pursue their socio-economic integration or flame nativist and xenophobic discourses. *Willkommenskultur* also aimed to counteract gendered Islamophobic constructions of Arab and Muslim men as terrorists, or "bad Muslims," who threaten religious and political norms. Though *Willkommenskultur* initially offered unique opportunities for dialogue and engagement, particularly in cultural spaces, it was ultimately beset by the racialization of Syrians as foreign and resentment of the distribution of resources afforded by *Willkommenskultur*.

During this welcoming period, *orientalische musik* emerged as a discursive and performative space in which Syrian musicians navigated the embodied politics of difference, particularly the construction of foreignness through MultiKulti music-making. Mostly male Syrian musicians joined existing ensembles, collaborated with established musicians, and launched new projects in Berlin's thriving culture industry of MultiKulti music.[25] While they performed across music scenes, including electronic dance music, the most active space for visible Syrian participation was that of "orientalische Musik" (lit.

Oriental music; "Eastern" music, in contradistinction to "*Abendland*" or "*Okzident*," i.e. Western cultural forms).[26] "Oriental music" tends to be adapted as a constitutive element of an intercultural project, and "Oriental music" ensembles are often presented at festivals and programs that evoke a multicultural ethos.

At a June 2017 performance by the Babylon Orchestra that I attended in Berlin, the orchestra played a set of *orientalische Musik* at a reception for a conference titled "*Bildung für die Demokratie*" (Education for Democracy) that celebrated the founding of the August Bebel Institute.[27] The institute generally aligns with the Social Democratic Party and promotes political education, cultural exchange, and dialogue to strengthen democracy. From the organizers' perspective, the Babylon Orchestra was an exemplary instantiation of these political ideals, particularly cultural exchange and dialogue, at a time of heated debates on immigration, cultural pluralism, and diversity in Germany. The event organizers seemingly leveraged multiculturalism as a strategic tactic for the promotion of the Social Democratic Party of Germany through their celebration of the Bebel Institute.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Figure-1-Shayna-Silverstein-1.jpg>

From right: Wassim Mukdad (oud) and Valentina Bellanova (ney) perform with the Babylon Orchestra at the Bebel Institute in Berlin, Germany. June 15, 2017. Image by author.

Towards the end of the event, the founder of the Babylon Orchestra, Mischa Tangian, introduced the musicians: "Wassim Mukdad on oud, from Syria; Michael Glucksmann on

guitar, from Israel; Valentina Bellanova on ney and recorder, from Italy; myself on violin, from Germany though I was born in Russia; Romeo Natur on percussion, from Palestine." During the last introduction, I noticed a look pass over the percussionist's face. I asked Wassim about this when we met up a couple of days later. "Oh that!" He laughed. "Yes, Mischa does that frequently. He considers himself German because though he was born in Russia, he grew up here. Yet he introduces certain others as non-German no matter where they were born or raised. The 'Palestinian' musician is born and raised in Germany, same with the Turkish musician. You know this mentality, where are you *really* from."

In short, Mischa framed each member of the ensemble according to their "country of origin," without articulating the specific historicity of migration patterns that might trouble the notion of a "country of origin." In so doing, the musicians embodied foreignness within Germany, despite several having been born and raised in Germany. As El-Tayeb has argued for in the context of *Afro-Deutsch* histories, the category of foreigner is a facile mask for overt racism, which each of these musicians has certainly experienced in musical spaces and daily life.[28] While the Babylon Orchestra is hardly the only musical act to utilize these identity categories, it is striking because the orchestra promotes itself as "a response to the multicultural crisis" yet reproduces the problematic logic of multiculturalism wherein diversity exoticizes and essentializes at the expense of lived experiences with racism. The presence of "foreign" and gendered bodies performing musical labor underscores how difference is presented, produced, and embodied as visible and sonic Others through musical performance. This difference, suggests Michael O'Toole, "is the very basis upon which dialogue and exchange can and ought to take place."[29] When this difference is affixed to static notions of ethnicity, nation, and culture, it becomes a site for the reproduction of social hierarchies in which Germanness remains unmarked and invisible.

Yet Wassim remains mostly untroubled by this logic. He "believes in the Babylon concept, of multiple languages, of trying to sort through encounters between musical cultures, of Mesopotamia" as a reference point. But moreover, he admires Mischa's ability to network with institutions, musicians, and others in the industry. "I've received a lot of gigs through Babylon," he shares. Though Wassim is ambivalent about the logic of multiculturalism, especially when musician identities are essentialized and exoticized, he is also pragmatic about the benefits of institutional connections that he gains through his multicultural labor. Multicultural music-making is a site of encounter where these histories become embodied, articulated, and socialized into consumable forms of difference that are always already racialized.

What this comparative discussion of multiculturalism in Syria and Germany suggests is that local experiences of multiculturalism are not bound to the particulars of difference and the discursive spaces in which they are constructed. Rather, global configurations of identity, culture, and empire structure the production and performance of difference in ways that trace back to colonial forms of domination. The construction of Syrian difference in Berlin's MultiKulti music scene is therefore not only a narrative of migration wherein race is encountered upon the arrival of an asylum seeker into the West. Rather, what I have suggested here is that racial and ethnic forms of difference dwell in spaces structured by broader transnational histories of postcolonialism and imperialism, histories that circulate across Ottoman, French, Syrian, and German spaces. These spaces more often than not reproduce whiteness as an invisible social category through embodied performances of non-whiteness and foreignness in ways that continually reconfigure the social relations of racecraft.

Security as Racemaking in the Egyptian Independent Music Scene and Beyond

In his efforts to build a successful independent band among both an Egyptian and regional Arabic-speaking audience, one of my close friends is required to travel frequently to perform and organize gigs.[30] Unfortunately, his birth name is exactly the same as a man wanted for "terrorism." Whenever we get together in Cairo, he recounts his latest ordeals in traveling. At airports he is often interrogated for hours in a small room, sometimes missing his flight. He routinely has problems getting visas. The constant harassment he endures is not only on flights to North America and Europe, but also when he travels to other Arab capitals such as Amman, Beirut, and Dubai. In May 2018, upon returning from a gig, a musician in his band was detained upon arrival at the Cairo airport and imprisoned indefinitely without charge. This case is not unique. The policing of Egyptian artists, and of Egyptians generally, has reached unprecedented levels since 2013. But the Egyptian state does not act alone. Instead it is one part of a much larger, global apparatus that shapes the independent arts scene in Egypt through a racialized logic of "security."

Independent arts are those that largely exist without sustained state patronage or support from the multinational commercial industry. Often highly politicized by the Egyptian state, these arts are primarily funded by entities based outside of Egypt. The cultural branches of embassies such as the American, French, British, and German have traditionally acted as gatekeepers in this scene, providing some of the few small performance venues and limited funding. These entities were especially active after the 2011 revolution, bringing artists and arts managers from abroad to give "expert" performances, talks, and workshops with their counterparts in Egypt. Their cultural programming, largely outside the Egyptian state's control, enjoys more freedom in exhibiting work that otherwise might be deemed too politically risky at Egyptian-run independent venues. Egyptians performing independent music, for instance, are politicized by the Egyptian state and often treated as a security risk. Foreigners from abroad playing music with similar aesthetics, however, are often not. One founder of an independent art space in Cairo told me of his weekly film screenings, "We explore controversial topics like dictatorship but through foreign films and locations such as in Italy. The authorities do not see this as a threat." Whereas Egyptians performing international music styles are regularly denied travel—by both foreign governments who deny visas to Egyptians and the Egyptian state who uses the airport as a military checkpoint to extralegally detain its citizens—foreigners from Western countries easily come and go by obtaining a tourist visa upon arrival at the Egyptian airport.

Extending a technopolitics reminiscent of the colonial era, one assumption entangled in this logic of security is that any shortcomings in the Egyptian cultural sector are due to a lack of local "expertise."[31] One independent filmmaker from Alexandria told me, for instance, "The film scene [here] needs experts from outside to grow it." Some independent musicians likewise send their tracks to be mixed in places such as Athens and Los Angeles because, as a member of one of the most popular independent bands in Egypt told me, "they know what they are doing," implying that Egyptian sound engineers and music producers do not. In short, local and global logics of security intersect to curtail and devalue the capacities of Egyptian musicians while enabling disproportionate opportunities in Egypt for certain "foreigners."

For most Egyptians, these realities have little to do with race. They pertain instead to unequal access to resources and opportunities amid conditions of global inequality.

Sending tracks to be mixed abroad, for example, results in part from a lack of access to the highest quality production equipment and music production training programs in Egypt.[32] But these structures of power index racialized relations and exist in dialogue with global racial identity politics. They privilege certain bodies over others, positioning some as able to move and embody expertise through intersections of nationality, language, ethnicity, and religion, among other aspects.

Anthropologist Jemima Pierre's study of identity in contemporary urban Ghana demonstrates how local discourses and practices engage the global political economy and racialized identity politics, even when race is largely regarded as a non-issue by much of the local population. She draws from Charles W. Mills' concept of "global White supremacy," to argue that the only way to analyze the persistence of white privilege in postcolonial spaces is to consider it within a global framework and in the historical context of empire.[33] Whereas Pierre's study focuses on a dichotomy of whiteness and blackness, the brief examples from Egypt above suggest a blurring of this dichotomy—though not an isolation from it. Foreigners, particularly from powerful Western nations, are afforded a certain privileged status and class standing related to assumptions about potential security risk as well as access to education, knowledge, wealth, and resources. These foreigners are often, but are not exclusively, white. Rather than understand their privilege through a framework of Black and white, then, the designation "foreign" more aptly signals a form of power and privilege that is racialized through its very exclusion of Egyptians and those from less privileged nations or circumstances, including others from the SWANA region, refugees, and sub-Saharan Africans.

Following Pierre and El-Tayeb, I examine the notion of "the foreigner" (*al-agnabī*) to question how local and global logics of security in Egypt intersect with, though are not reducible to, both a global privileging of whiteness and a local aversion in Egypt toward dark skin. If the designation "foreigner" is a mask for racism in Germany, as El-Tayeb argues and as Silverstein's ethnography above demonstrates, in Egypt it similarly operates as a marker of difference but one that suggests a proximity to certain types of globalized power. This power manifests as a privileged class standing associated with expertise and an exemption from much of the scrutiny and brutality of security, allowing freedom of movement and a heightened platform from which to disseminate one's knowledge and/or art, among other benefits. In the privileging of certain foreign bodies, the Egyptian state is entangled in global racial logics, extending these processes of racemaking within Egypt's borders and among its own citizens. Although *al-agnabī* is not coterminous with Euro-American conceptions of whiteness, it intersects with, and at times perpetuates, global white supremacy. It extends the structures of power of dominant Western nations, whose economic infrastructure and regimes of governance emerged from and continue to adhere to notions of white superiority. In Egyptian independent arts spaces, the racialization of security affords foreigners, and especially those from powerful Western countries, privileged status such that many Egyptians require or prefer closeness and collaboration with them over others. Rather than indicating an uncritical adherence to the global privileging of whiteness, however, the privileging of the "foreigner" allowed Egyptian cultural programmers to skirt the limitations of the Egyptian state's policing and to have access to particular mobilities and resources that would otherwise be out of reach for them. This is perhaps the persistent power of global white privilege—it can be perpetuated without the wholesale adoption of its logic.

Although recognizing that it is absolutely crucial to go beyond a Black/white dichotomy, my limited focus on global whiteness and local conceptions of darkness (*asmar*/*samra*) here

stems in part from my own positionality as a white American woman. This positionality overexposed me to experiences and discussions of white Euro-American foreignness and left me less privy to those surrounding other types of foreigners (Asian, South American, Black American, and so on). This brief ethnography is thus only a preliminary study intended to question how a conception of race might help us globally connect the realities of contemporary life in Egypt in new ways.

One way to understand how security logics maintain racialized relations of difference within Egypt is to connect Arab homeland and diaspora. In the West, the Egyptian state's extralegal imprisonment of Egyptians is often ignored as exceptional—Egypt's authoritarian regime is presumed to be a "local" problem. However, inequality regarding who is and is not deemed a security "threat" manifests through local and global configurations of power. In the United States, for instance, the program of Special Registration, in place from 2002 until 2016, was a system of state-mandated racial profiling of adult males from twenty-four Muslim-majority countries. It led to approximately 14,000 deportation proceedings and the detention of 3,000 persons.[34] Although this policing is treated as entirely separate from that which occurs in Egypt, it is no coincidence that the Egyptian military, which carries out surveillance and extralegal imprisonment of its citizens in Egypt, is the second largest recipient of US aid (after Israel), receiving $1.3 billion every year since 1987. I am not suggesting that Egyptian state policing is *only* an extension of the global "war on terror"; it certainly existed before 2001 and has its own unique history. However, the Egyptian state's own logic of security intertwines with these more globalized ones. Rather than seeing Egyptian policing as only inherent to "authoritarian" and supposedly exceptional regimes, the logic of security is fundamental to so-called democratic and authoritarian regimes alike. One of the ways to understand how local relationships within Egypt are in dialogue with the global political economy and diasporic identity politics may be through treating the concept of "security" as fundamentally racialized.[35]

The racialized nature of Egyptian state security became perhaps most obvious with the torture and murder of Giulio Regini, an Italian PhD student from the University of Cambridge, at the hands of the Egyptian police. Regini's death resulted in an international uproar and self-reflexive shock within Egypt.[36] Many English-language headlines expressed a sense of bewilderment at how something like this could happen.[37] Egyptian NGOs, however, have long documented the state's policy of forced disappearance (*ikhtifa' qasry*). They estimate that three to four Egyptians are disappeared every day under the state's guise of "security" and "counterterrorism." Crucially, there is rarely any widespread international attention given to these disappeared, tortured, and imprisoned Egyptians. The exceptional nature of Regini's murder resembles what Pierre has similarly identified in post-colonial Ghana: Western foreigners—and those who present as white from powerful countries especially—enjoy rights, advantages, and special treatment derived from membership in a particular minority "race." Although this privilege intersects with nationality, the special treatment of certain foreigners in Egypt cannot be explained by nationality alone. Americans in Egypt with dual Egyptian citizenship or those with Muslim or Arab names are sometimes more likely to be monitored and harassed by authorities on suspicions of "spying." Here, it is Regini's foreignness, and I would also argue his whiteness, that makes his death most startling. Similar to the way Arabs and Muslims in the United States are policed with greater intensity than their non-Arab, white American neighbors, so too has it become profoundly normalized that Egyptians are the targets of authoritarian policing—whether in Egypt or abroad—while certain foreigners from powerful countries are largely exempt from the most brutal realities of this policing.

Considering how local and global logics of "security" make possible foreign privilege raises questions regarding how this privilege may intertwine with—and in some cases reinforce—not only global white supremacy but also historical biases against dark (*asmar*/*samra*) or Black (*iswid*/*sūda*) skin and African migrants in Egypt. Just this past year there were a number of high-profile cases, including portrayals of blackface, in the mainstream Egyptian media and instances of discrimination against dark-skinned Egyptian women.[38] In one incident, a dark-skinned Egyptian woman was refused service by a pharmacist who told her "I don't take anything from people who are not white."[39] When prejudices against those with dark skin intersect with nationality and/or ethnicity, it has also contributed to outright violence. In 2005, for instance, the Egyptian state used rhetoric of "contagion" and "disease" as justification to violently remove Sudanese refugee protestors, killing at least twenty asylum seekers in what became known as the Mustapha Mahmoud Park Massacre. Scholars and journalists have demonstrated that there is widespread stereotyping in Egypt that links Africans with "disease" (especially HIV/AIDS), crime, and promiscuity or prostitution.[40] Distinct from Euro-American conceptions of anti-blackness, my friends in Egypt who used the term *al-ʿunṣūrrīyya* to describe these incidents insisted that it was not the same as racism in the United States. They told me, for instance, that Egyptian citizens with dark skin were not more likely to be policed than those with light skin. They did not face increased obstacles for employment and, for women, dark skin related more to beauty standards than socio-economic standing. Here, biases against dark skin intersect in complex ways with gender, class, nationality, and ethnicity, and more research is needed to understand how these local biases operate through alternative logics and manifest (or not) toward dark-skinned individuals from more powerful nations.[41]

As scholars have likewise shown, biases in Egypt against sub-Saharan Africans and those with dark skin do not only, or primarily, emerge as a colonial import nor from a contemporary logic of security.[42] Historian Eve Troutt Powell has demonstrated, for instance, how Egyptian imaginaries of the Sudan as "property" and the object of their own "civilizing mission" was fundamental to the development of modern Egyptian nationalism in the nineteenth century.[43] In what she calls "the perspective of the colonized colonizer," she details how Egypt's emancipation from the political and economic control of the British was envisioned through Egypt's unique claim to mastery over the Sudan. Blackface in this context, for instance, takes different meanings. Powell Troutt argues that, unlike in American blackface, stereotypical representations of Black Sudanese and Nubian men as servants, slaves, and buffoons were projections of cultural intimacy and connection. The Sudanese were not an "Other" but a depiction of a pre-independence Egyptian self that was "not quite grown up, not yet evolved."[44] Even if anti-Blackness in Egypt does not take on the same meanings as it has historically in the West, when viewed in terms of global relations of power today, it is likely to reinforce—even unwittingly—a global privileging of lightness, and by extension whiteness, and the special status of some (non-African, non-Arab) foreigners and not others.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Figure-2-Shayna-Silverstein.jpg>

Images from the No Color campaign. Used with permission.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Figure-3-Shayna-Silverstein.jpg>

Images from the No Color campaign. Used with permission.

There seems to be a growing awareness among a new generation that a concept of "racism," *al-ʿunṣūrrīyya*, is useful for understanding social inequality in Egypt. For instance, twenty-three-year-old Maha Hamada, of Nubian descent and dark skinned, started a media campaign in 2017 called "No Color," which encompasses a video, photographs, and a hashtag on social media used thousands of times by individuals to share their stories of colorism and racial prejudice. She got interested in the topic because she noticed

> If a dark woman marries someone lighter, people will make disparaging comments, and especially if a dark woman marries a foreigner [*agnabī*], they will say how could he marry this woman? How could he love her? I found that this was really a pervasive problem, but when I would talk about it with my [light skinned] friends, they wouldn't believe me that it was that pervasive. No one would believe that we had racism [*al-ʿunṣūrrīyya*] here.

It is striking that Hamada views "foreigner" and "dark"-skinned as mutually exclusive. Indeed, African migrants in Egypt are described as *afrīqī,* "African," and rarely described as *agnabī*, "foreign." Popular usage of the word "foreigner" today thus appears to signify a certain proximity to global power that intersects with, though is not reducible to, a proximity to lightness. For Pierre, the desire for lightness occurs in direct relation, and in response, to white and light-skin color privilege and reveals common ideas about the global nature of race.[45]

More research is needed to understand how local conceptions of dark skin (*asmar*/*samra*) and blackness (*iswid*/*sūda*) intersect with and diverge from more globalized notions of anti-Black racism in post-independence Egypt, especially with regard to how such prejudices may serve today as means of grappling with the continuing legacies of empire and particularly neoliberal and neocolonial relations that privilege notions of and proximity to whiteness. Local experiences of (im)mobility, security, and access to resources in Egypt are informed by these more global logics that enact processes of racemaking within Egypt. While remaining sensitive to the particularity of historical experience and to the considerable pushback from many in Egypt who criticize a Western impulse to racialize Egyptians as "black" or "African,"[46] taking seriously how local conceptions of difference intertwine with and, in some cases, reinforce global racialized structures of power offers a much needed lens for understanding social life in Egypt today.

Conclusion

Our ethnographic case studies have demonstrated how the construction of foreignness in popular culture masks deeper social structures at play, ones that both perpetuate and are grounded in racialized histories. By presenting some of the complexities and tensions in trying to theorize race in Arab lived experience, we have suggested where and how Arabness may or may not appear as a particular and historically specific ethnic construct in multiracial societies, while also observing tensions between colorism as a distinct racialized experience and race as an unmarked category of exclusion and privilege. The case studies discussed here also make clear the need for future research to explicitly address the question of how gender, as well as class, nationality, and religion, intersects with race and to demonstrate how racial systems of oppression are linked to both global and local structures of power.

What is clear is that racecraft, marked and unmarked, dwells in the interstices of known social categories. The question remains how to theorize the production and contestation of such difference. On the one hand, we have historicized contemporary constructions of foreignness, Arabness, and whiteness by tracing these social categories of difference to historical legacies of colonialism, empire, and nationalism. This allows us to demonstrate that racecraft exists, even if in terms that are more invisible than visible, unmarked than marked, and within discursive categories not typically recognized by critical race theory with its focus on Western societies scarred by racial conflict. On the other hand, as historian Sherene Seikaly urges, our work needs to think more through race not primarily in terms of European colonial legacies but in regional terms. In so doing, we might speak back to what critical race theory has not fully accounted for, namely how to address racemaking in the absence of entrenched histories of racial conflict and discourse. That there remains unresolved questions and domains of research, such as colorism or the materialism of race, attests to the fact that more research on race in Arab lived experience, especially in relation to blackness, is needed.

Recent developments suggest there is a growing awareness and unease among younger generations towards racial politics as it affects them within Egypt and among displaced Syrians adapting to life as minoritized subjects outside of the SWANA region. Hamada's "No Color" campaign has spurred discussions of racism towards those with dark skin in Egyptian media in ways that signal the pervasive ways race is structuring social categories and cultural meanings in Arab popular culture. Critiques of recent portrayals of blackface in mainstream Egyptian television used the word *al-ʿunṣūrrīyya* with specific reference to anti-Black racism, signaling that attitudes towards blackface as largely innocuous have changed since Troutt Powell's study on the topic in pre-independence Egypt. The forced migration of Syrians, within and outside of the SWANA region, likewise raises important questions about how race is performed strategically in shifting transnational geographies of difference. These and other phenomena encourage future research that decenters Europe in ways that nudge race beyond Western-centric discourses and into those already circulating in Arab-majority societies.

Notes

1. Farha Ghannam, *Live and Die Like a Man: Gender Dynamics in Urban Egypt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

2. Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar, "Anthropologies of Arab-Majority Societies," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41, no. 1 (2012): 537–558.

3. Linda Alcoff,*The Future of Whiteness* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015).

4. Didier Fassin, "Policing Borders, Producing Boundaries: The Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011): 213–226. Sarah Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009). Paul Silverstein, "Immigrant Racialization and the New Savage Slot: Race, Migration, and Immigration in the New Europe," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005): 363–84.

5. Sherene Seikaly, "Productive Discomforts: Black-Palestine Solidarity" (talk given at the UC Consortium for Black Studies, UCLA, January 24, 2019).

6. Jemima Pierre,*The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), xii. Pierre's use of "racecraft" is related to but distinct from Karen E. Fields and Barbara G. Fields's use of the same term, in that while both focus on the practice of racism as conditional for the presence of racism, Pierre undertakes a

transnational geography of racecraft, as opposed to Fields and Fields's focus on contemporary American politics and society.

7. Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

8. Fatima El-Tayeb, "'If You Can't Pronounce My Name, You Can Just Call Me Pride': Afro-German Activism, Gender and Hip Hop," *Gender & History* (2003): 462.

9. Fassin, "Policing Borders."

10. Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (University of California, 2018).

11. Daniel J. Gilman, *Cairo Pop: Youth Music in Contemporary Egypt,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

12. Personal communication, June 2017, Berlin, Germany.

13. "Babylon Orchestra," accessed December 31, 2019, https://babylonorchester.github.io/ < https://babylonorchester.github.io/> .

14. "Babylon Orchestra."

15. El-Tayeb, *European Others*.

16. Since 1962, Kurdish persons living in Syria have been denied citizenship, the right to hold property, or to serve in government positions, which in prewar Syria constituted approximately thirty percent of the employment sector.

17. Though not discussed in terms of the discursive concept of race, racialized experiences are present in Syrian everyday life, where Syrians typically judge one another on the basis of dialect and phenotype. The pop vocalist Saria al-Sawas, for instance, was debased in public in the late 2000s for her darker complexion and ambiguous dialect that marked her as Other. In another instance, one Black American student who was studying Arabic in Damascus in 2008 came into my apartment visibly shaken. He had been harassed on the street with racial slurs to the extent that he feared an act of violence.

18. Yassin al-Haj Saleh, *Impossible Revolution* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017).

19. The social division of the population into majority-minority groups itself has a historical foundation in empire, namely the late Ottoman empire's millet system that divided populations into confessional groups, French and British empire-making in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the Mandate-era "divide-and-conquer" policy by French colonial authorities that reinforced confessional divisions. Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000. Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

20. El-Tayeb, *European Others*.

21. Sabine Von Dirke, "Multikulti: The German Debate on Multiculturalism," *German Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (1994): 513–536, https://doi.org/10.2307/1431898 < https://doi.org/10.2307/1431898> .

22. Xenophobic responses to Syrian refugees occur not only in Europe but also among countries that neighbor Syria. In Turkey, Syrian refugees have been labeled "Suriyeli," a pejorative term associated with criminality, poverty, and prostitution, and have been the targets of hate crimes and discrimination. Dogus Simsek, "Anti-Syrian Racism in Turkey," openDemocracy, 2015, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/antisyrian-racism-in-turkey/ < https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/antisyrian-racism-in-turkey/> .

Similar patterns occur in Lebanon, though these are marked by a longer history of labor, occupation, and marginalization. John Chalcraft, *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*. (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

23. Turner writes of similar hierarchies between Syrian and African refugees in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, where, due to the colonial hierarchies of race that structure humanitarian work, Syrian "refugee entrepreneurs" are perceived as "closer to whiteness" than African refugees who are perceived as "passive" and "dependent" on relief efforts. Lewis Turner, "#Refugees can be entrepreneurs too!' Humanitarianism, race, and the marketing of Syrian refugees," *Review of International Studies* 46, no. 1 (2020): 137–8.

24. El-Tayeb, *European Others*.

25. During two visits to Berlin last year, I encountered at least six ensembles (Tarab Taksi, Orphe, Babylon Orchestra, Matar, Fattoush, Kayan Project) that were explicitly multicultural and several more that presented Middle Eastern music in multicultural settings (Berlin Oriental Group, Musiqana, Jamila and the Other Heroes). These numbers have surely shifted since, in the fluid and active cultural spaces of Berlin.

26. Distinct from, but overlapping with "*arabische Music*" (Arab music) and *türkische Musik* (Turkish music), this category broadly encompasses Asian musical cultures, particularly those from former Ottoman territories. In the context of Berlin's vibrant and populous Turkish and Syrian communities, "Oriental" musical repertoire is often comprised of Turkish, Syrian, and Lebanese songs, instruments, and aesthetic forms.

27. The repertoire at this event heavily emphasized folk and traditional songs performed across the Eastern Mediterranean especially Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon, such as "Hijaz Mandra" and a *longa* by Riad al-Sunbati.

28. El-Tayeb, *European Others*.

29. Michael O'Toole, "Sonic Citizenship: Music, Migration, and Transnationalism in Berlin's Turkish and Anatolian Diasporas" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2014), 177.

30. Artists use the Arabic word *mustaqill* (independent) or the English word "independent."

31. Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

32. Import taxes on equipment are high and the state does not adequately invest in public education.

33. Pierre, *Predicament of Blackness*, xv.

34. Moustafa Bayoumi, "The Race is On: Muslims and Arabs in the American Imagination," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 2010, https://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/race < https://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/race> .

35. Pierre, *Predicament of Blackness*, xv; Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, "Is Securitization Theory Racist? Civilizationism, Methodological Whiteness, and Antiblack Thought in the Copenhagen School," *Security Dialogue* 51, no. 1 (2020): 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010619862921 < https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0967010619862921> .

36. Yasmin El-Rifae, "Blog: That Metallic Sound that Hits Us," *Mada Masr*, February 6, 2016, http://www.madamasr.com/opinion/blog-metallic-sound-hits-us < http://www.madamasr.com/opinion/blog-metallic-sound-hits-us> .

37. See for instance Stephanie Kirchgaessner and Ruth Michaelson, "Why was He Killed? Brutal Death of Italian Student in Egypt Confounds Experts," *Guardian*, February 24, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/24/why-was-he-killed-brutal-death-of-italian-student-in-egypt-confounds-experts < https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/24/why-was-he-killed-brutal-death-of-italian-student-in-egypt-confounds-experts> .

38. See for instance Nour Eltigani, "The Battle of the Races: Egypt's Media Syndicte Finally Took a Stand Against Racism," *Egyptian Streets*, May 29, 2019, https://egyptianstreets.com/2019/05/29/the-battle-of-the-races-egypts-media-syndicate-finally-took-a-stance-against-racism/ < https://egyptianstreets.com/2019/05/29/the-battle-of-the-races-egypts-media-syndicate-finally-took-a-stance-against-racism/> .

39. "The Nada Zatouna Incident: The Strange Case of the Racist Egyptian Pharmacist that Came Out of Nowhere!!" *The Strange and the Marvelous* (blog), April 28, 2013, https://thedomainofthestrange.wordpress.com/2013/04/28/the-nada-zatouna-incident-the-strange-case-of-the-racist-egyptian-pharmacist-that-came-out-of-nowhere/ < https://thedomainofthestrange.wordpress.com/2013/04/28/the-nada-zatouna-incident-the-strange-case-of-the-racist-egyptian-pharmacist-that-came-out-of-nowhere/> .

40. Minal Giri, "On Contagion: Sudanese Refugees, HIV/AIDS and the Social Order in Egypt," *Égypte/Monde arabe* 4 (2007): 179–198; Sunni M. Khalid, "Egypt's Race Problem," *The Root*, February 3, 2011, https://www.theroot.com/egypts-race-problem-1790862617 < https://www.theroot.com/egypts-race-problem-1790862617> ; Raman Sharif, "Jarīdat yīūm sābʿa tanshur taḥqīqan ʿunṣurīyyan b-ʿanwān n——s" ("Newspaper *The Seventh Day* Publishes Racist Report under the Title 'N——s'"), *Al-ʿunṣūriyya ḍid al-sūd fī miṣr wa al-ʿālam al-ʿarabī* (*Anti-Black Racism in Egypt and the Arab World*) (blog), January 16, 2015. https://blackinegypt.wordpress.com/2015/01/16/جريدة-اليوم-السابع-تنشر-تحقيقا-عنصريا/ < https://blackinegypt.wordpress.com/2015/01/16/%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9-%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A7-%D8%B9%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7/> ; Valentina Primo, "'They Call Us Black and Filthy': Sudanese Refugees in Egypt, Trapped Between Racism and Violence," *Cairo Scene*, June 6, 2017, https://cairoscene.com/In-Depth/They-Call-Us-Black-and-Filthy-Sudanese-Refugees-in-Egypt-Trapped-Between-Racism-and-Violence < https://cairoscene.com/In-Depth/They-Call-Us-Black-and-Filthy-Sudanese-Refugees-in-Egypt-Trapped-Between-Racism-and-Violence> . (*Editors' note:* Lateral *does not generally print racial slurs, and accordingly, we have edited the display of the citation to Raman Sharif's blog post above.*)

41. A 2015 report in *Cairo Scene* suggests that Black and dark-skinned individuals from powerful nations are routinely harassed in Egypt and their expertise and knowledge diminished. Valentina Primo, "The Reality of Racism in Egypt," *Cairo Scene*, August 5, 2015, https://cairoscene.com/LifeStyle/The-Reality-of-Racism-in-Egypt < https://cairoscene.com/LifeStyle/The-Reality-of-Racism-in-Egypt> .

42. See also Seikaly, "Productive Discomforts."

43. Eve Troutt Powell, "Egyptians in Blackface: Nationalism and the Representation of the Sudan in Egypt, 1919," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 2, no. 2 (1995): 27–45.

44. Powell Troutt, "Egyptians in Blackface"; see also Elizabeth Smith, "In His Heart and Soul He's Egyptian, the Nile Flows through His Veins: Bakkar as Egyptian and African," *Critical Interventions* 3, no. 1 (2009): 123–139

45. Pierre, *Predicament of Blackness*, 103.

46. See for instance Nehal El Meligy, "America is Grey-Blind: When I'm Here, I'm Black," *Egyptian Streets*, May 21, 2018, https://egyptianstreets.com/2018/05/21/america-is-grey-blind-when-im-here-im-black/ < https://egyptianstreets.com/2018/05/21/america-is-grey-blind-when-im-here-im-black/> .

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On Blackness and the Nation in Arabic Hip Hop: Case Studies from Lebanon and Libya

by Chris Nickell and Adam Benkato | Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA), Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT In this contribution, Chris Nickell and Adam Benkato think together about the mobilization of Blackness in Arabic hip hop from two different contexts: a rap battle in Beirut, Lebanon and music videos from Benghazi, Libya. In both, hip hop artists confront Blackness with the nation through the Afro-diasporic medium of hip hop. Although the examples we consider here participate, in several ways, in hip hop's larger generic functions as a globalized Black medium of resistance, they also bolster pre-existing discourses of race and racism, anti-Blackness in particular. We argue that this seeming contradiction—instances of anti-Blackness appearing in an iteration of a Black expressive form—is in fact a feature, not a bug, of the flexible way the genre works. We have paired these two examples, which we describe and analyze individually given their differing social contexts as well as our differing research focuses, in order to glimpse the discursive level at which racecraft functions.

KEYWORDS anti-Blackness, Arabic, hip hop, Lebanon, Libya, masculinity, race

Ejecting Blackness from the Nation: A Rap Battle in Beirut

On the iconic steps of a rapidly-gentrifying neighborhood in East Beirut called Mar Mkhayel, a crowd of mostly young Lebanese men with some foreigners and even fewer women has gathered to witness the first recorded rap battle in Lebanon. Chyno, a Syrian-Filipino rapper based in Beirut, has organized this event to launch the battle rap league he manages: The Arena, or *el Ḥalba* in Arabic. Battle rap can be characterized as a subgenre of hip hop that grows out of African American vernacular spoken word traditions like the dozens and played an important role in its improvised form in early hip hop. It has become a commercially viable subculture in recent years, with the establishment of several US- and Canada-based leagues that feature professional battle rappers who trade delivery of pre-written sets of "bars" in performances that regularly garner several million views on YouTube. In this rap battle, Ivorian-Lebanese rapper Edd Abbas will square off against Lebanese-American professional battle rapper Dizaster while "Diz" is in Beirut for vacation in late May 2015.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Image-1-Adam-Benkato.png>

Figure 1. Edd Abbas (left) squares off against Dizaster (right) with Chyno moderating (center) on the steps of Mar Mkhayel in East Beirut.

Edd begins with a call of "ouf ouf ouf" to which the audience dutifully responds with one more "ouf."[1] (In the footnotes, readers can watch along with English subtitles for the various moments described here.) This is the traditional opening for *zajal*, a form of improvisational Arabic folk poetry with enduring cachet in Lebanon, which leads Edd into a sung line. His brief but powerful allusion to *zajal* grounds Edd's claims to Lebaneseness by a chain of equivalence that runs from the genre to the nation by way of a gentlemanly, working-class masculinity grounded in verbal over physical prowess. *Zajal* here is conjured as an Arabized, indigenous analogue to the rap battle, one wherein pairs of boys or men, from school children through village elders, square off in a competition of wit. Edd transitions from this opening gesture grounding the rap battle in Lebanese and wider Arabic aural traditions into a spoken rebuke of Dizaster's bad boy persona. He berates Dizaster for forgetting his roots, behaving badly in the US by snitching on and punching MCs, and embarrassing his people.

Throughout his bars, Edd makes clear that he identifies himself as a part of the Lebanese "we." He refers repeatedly to this collective that sometimes includes and other times excludes Dizaster, whose given name is Bashir. I want to draw attention to the nuance of this inclusive/exclusive "we" in the following excerpt, where Edd's insult lands favorably enough to get an encore:[2]

Bashir, abroad you represent us. Not just me, but all of us [gestures to the audience].	يا باشير, أنت برّة تتمثلنا, مش بس أنا بس تتمثل كل العالم.
Abroad you represent us. So for God's sake, be smarter.	أنت برة تتمثلنا فبحياة الخالق كون أذكى
Every time you hit an MC, I as Lebanese am put down	أنا كلبناني عم MC كل ما تضرب بتبهدل
You don't have the soul of a good sport (x2).	ما عندك روح رياضية
You just have jealousy, And that's why you act like a child.	عندك غيرة لهيك تتولدى
Fuck this shit, you embarrass us in front of foreigners!	كس إخت هالشغلة قدام الأجانب جرسنا

In the opening phrases, Dizaster is held up as representative for all Lebanese, as Edd implores him to be smarter. In the closing phrases, Dizaster embarrasses Edd and his fellow Lebanese while abroad, which calls the the diasporic battle rapper's own Lebaneseness into question. This questioning further buttresses Edd's own claims to Lebanese-ness. Edd's performance of Lebanese identity challenges the audience to reconcile his Blackness with his being more Lebanese than the diasporic Dizaster.

Edd's bars about authenticity and identity play out good-naturedly, but Dizaster changes the energy completely when he begins his.[3] He imitates a stereotypical Arab accent as he says in English "are you ready, Eddy?" before sliding into an Arabic imitation of Edd's gravelly voice and cool demeanor to mock his flow and self-possession. This impression gives way to Dizaster's higher-pitched, more pinched voice as he lays into Edd's skin color:

You know what I've heard?	بتعرف شو سمعت أنا؟
That you're afraid I want to insult your representation.	إنّ كنت خيفان بدي إنزعلك سمعتك
That I'm Dizaster and I hit people in America,	إنه <انا ديزاستر مخبط عليه <بأميركا
that I'm going to wear out your name	وبدّي شوّهلك إسمك
But think about it, Eddy. Look at your body:	بس فكّر فيها يا أدّي. طلّع بشكلك وجسمك
How can I blacken your face [i.e. shame you] when you're already black?	ما كيف بدي سوّدلك وجهك؟منّك أسود كلّك!

The pun here is a racist one in which "to blacken another's face" is to shame or embarrass, which Dizaster literalizes by referencing Edd's skin color. Roughly 75 percent of the rest of Dizaster's bars directly insult Edd by making fun of his hair, the history of African slavery in Arab societies that continues through the *kefāla* system that organizes the forced labor of largely East African domestic workers in Lebanon today, and Edd's attempt to ground his bars in a Lebanese-ness that Dizaster denies him. The remaining 25 percent are jokes about penis size and sexual violence that solidify the lyrical performance of hypermasculinity and intersect with stereotypes of ethnicity and race.

At one point, Dizaster thoroughly rejects Edd's origins by calling him Sudanese and compares his role in Arabic hip hop to that of a live-in superintendant, which in Beirut is often the job of a racialized immigrant other.[4] In doing so, Dizaster begins quietly intense and menacing before he takes up a tremendous amount of space with his gestures, fully extending his arms, smacking his chest, punctuating his speech with aggressive hand movements. Chyno, the battle moderator, plasters on a nervous smile as he rocks back and forth, while Edd adopts a hands-behind-back stance of waiting. Dizaster's two extremes of theatrical masculinity here uncomfortably resemble very real masculinities of racial supremacy—both the white supremacist violence against Black people in the US and the beatings of East African domestic workers in Lebanese households that sometimes make headlines. And yet many members of the audience at The Arena seem to be laughing good-naturedly.

The masculinity Dizaster performs during his bars enables anti-Blackness to grind across cultural formations, using humor as a vehicle or alibi. Battle rap, like its progenitor hip hop, is a Black verbal art form, one in which Black people still predominate but where the playing field has widened in the US and elsewhere to include more non-Black rappers than other sub-genres of hip hop. Dizaster is one such non-Black rapper who has risen through the ranks. In much of his battling against Black rappers in the US, Dizaster takes on the stylings of a hard-edged, African American masculinity through which he jockeys for dominance in verbal skill, gun violence, and conquest of women. While his bars might be frequently characterized as "crossing a line" based on audience reactions, that line is more often one of personal attacks rather than racial politics. Battle rap is also an art form in which homophobia, misogyny, and ethnic stereotyping are par for the course. Indeed, in North American battles, Dizaster frequently receives and circulates Arab and Muslim stereotypes, despite his being from a Druze family.[5] When Dizaster does make anti-Black remarks in these US and Canadian battles, audience support quickly retreats and he finds little response to his punch lines.

In other words, a diasporic Lebanese man who has built a career competing in a Black American verbal art form is returning to Beirut and marshaling both hypermasculinity and Lebanese anti-Black stereotypes to delegitimize the authority of a Black Lebanese competitor, to the approval of a young audience that skews lighter-skinned and male, in a video that ultimately helps sustain a young hip hop scene in the Middle East. Race-as-discourse in Dizaster's bars activate those anti-Black stereotypes this audience connects to, while the inhabiting of the ethnic Lebanese voice, carriage, and gesture solidify race-as-performance that obliterates Edd's more complicated and precarious performance of Lebaneseness. This situation is a mirror image of the kind of Black self-fashionings that Marc Perry identifies as traveling with the hip hop genre.[6] Instead, what has traveled in the battle between Dizaster and Edd Abbas is the anti-Black racism common in both the US and Lebanon, through the Afro-diasporic vehicle of battle rap.

Chyno, the league organizer and himself an active rapper in Beirut, knew this kind of racist performance was a distinct possibility back in 2015, having followed Dizaster and the larger US and Anglophone Canadian battle rap scenes for over a decade. Ultimately, Dizaster's ability to increase visibility for The Arena led Chyno to work with him, several times now. Each time, Chyno tells me, Dizaster has performed for free. The videos have on average ten to fifteen times more views than any of the Arena's other videos, around 400,000. Dizaster stands to make inroads with a local crowd, a crowd for whom his English material may have been inaccessible, by playing to racist stereotypes that solidify his own Lebanese belonging despite his diasporic past. His anglophone fans get to see him as an "authentic" Arab, having heard his opponents' bars that fall back on staid stereotypes of prayer rugs and terrorism. He can also lay claim to having founded battle rap in the Middle East, credit which organizer Chyno graciously grants him. Edd wants to support Chyno's project to build battle rap leagues in the Middle East. Because we have missed each other in Beirut the last few times I was there, I have not spoken with Edd about the rap battle, but I know he has a penchant for competition and enjoys displaying his artistry. He also stands to gain from the publicity of appearing in a rap battle video with Dizaster. Ultimately, however, he gets caught up as a foil to Dizaster's anti-Black bars, without an opportunity to respond in the one-round battle.

Subjugating Blackness into the Nation: Rap Videos from Benghazi

About halfway into his 2018 music video "منطقتنا" ("Our Area"), Libyan rapper Double Y drops the following lines as he gestures to two men in the background, one lighter-skinned and one darker-skinned: "we've got the *whites* and the *n***as* / look, we've got no racism".[7] The rapper's point, somewhat unexpected thus far in the song, is to include the supposed lack of racism as one among many positive qualities of his neighborhood, the al-Hada'iq district of Benghazi. These lines and accompanying gesture, as they map US-American racial categories in English onto Libyan subjects, fail to hold up Double Y's claim but instead provide a clue as to how Libyan artists conceive of and instrumentalize race and racism within the structures and aesthetics of hip-hop. Here, I want to try to illustrate this by examining in more depth two recent music videos by major Libyan rappers from Benghazi. Although this short piece cannot attend to the complexities of race in Libyan society, the contours relevant here can be briefly related as follows. The imposed colonial borders of the modern nation-state of Libya include Black and non-Black indigenous peoples, all of whom were discursively constructed as "non-Libyan" through forty years of totalitarian Arab nationalist rule and propaganda (despite a phase of shallow pan-Africanism). Additionally, other groups of Black people are present in Libya, either due to recent migration and human trafficking towards Europe or as a result of the early modern trans-Saharan slave trade. General media as well as popular discourse in the country tend to conflate categories such as African, Black, and non-Libyan with the result that Blackness and Libyanness are often juxtaposed.

In 2017, Ahmed Alshafee returned to the hip hop scene after a year-long absence with a new music video. His previous songs, in which he rapped about the disastrous effects of unemployment, or general disenchantment after the 2011 Libyan revolution, could be characterized as a type of Libyan conscious rap. "Kish," though, was a marked shift in his aesthetic and content.[8] Like many of his videos, it is set in al-Kīsh, a poorer neighborhood

adjacent to downtown Benghazi. But here, instead of the run-down buildings and abandoned warehouses of al-Kīsh forming the backdrop to a discussion of social issues, they are intended to provide a "gangsta" aesthetic for the video. As Alshafee, shirtless in a video for the first time, raps lines in partial English such as "*n***a, I'm a gangsta, gangsta, gangsta | thug life*, watch out don't forget it" surrounded by his (also shirtless) posse bearing various weapons, deadly turf battles are depicted via intercut scenes.[9] Full of posturing, tough-looking, weapon-brandishing young men, the song—as its (English) chorus "*Kish, my hood, my city*" declares— mainly consists of Alshafee bragging about the toughness and masculinity which characterizes both himself and his neighborhood.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Image-2-Adam-Benkato.png>

Figure 2. Rapper Ahmed Alshafee (center with baseball bat) and his posse in the video for "Kish" (2017).

Yet it is not so much Alshafee's lyrics which create a feeling of a tough or violent part of town, but rather the visuals, in particular the racial composition, and actions, of his posse, comprised mostly Black Libyans who brandish weapons in the background or participate in turf battles. As the song ends and the beat fades out, individual members of his posse are highlighted as they attempt to perform a type of tough masculinity by flashing weapons and polishing knives.[10] Of these, all except one are Black. The visual message is rather clear: Alshafee is drawing upon an association—partially derived from Western hip hop—of Blackness with gangs and urban violence in order to achieve his desired "gangsta" aesthetic. Indeed, "Kish" is probably to be counted among the first Libyan "gangsta" rap videos. Nevertheless, other Libyan rappers who I have interviewed find "Kish" rather unconvincing—Alshafee's sudden turn to an exaggerated performance of masculinity linked with employment of racial stereotypes comes across as disingenuous to those familiar with his background and previous rap interests. Interestingly, the aesthetic of "Kish" seems to be something Alshafee could only accomplish by instrumentalizing his posse of mostly Black Libyan men.

Around the same time, MC Swat, one of the most important figures in Libyan rap since the 2011 revolution, released a music video entirely different in tone and substance. In "استغلال" ("Exploitation"), his last production in Libya before fleeing across the Mediterranean due to death threats,[11] MC Swat angrily takes on the corruption, assassinations, kidnappings and other social ills which have plagued Libya in the past few

years.[12] Laying out a litany of the average Libyan's suffering, MC Swat sums it all up in the chorus:

Exploitation! Killing, killing, and exhaustion!	استغلال قتل قتل والاستهلاك
Libyans' sustenance flows away and their blood becomes halal	رزق الليبي سايل ودمه تما حلال
Rape and murder, kidnapping and killing	الاغتصاب والاغتيال الخطف والاقتتال
Just another day in the life of a Libyan	روتين الليبي اليومي في جدول الاعمال
Exploitation!	استغلال



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Image-3-Adam-Benkato.png>

Figure 3. MC Swat is assassinated by a hit man hired by other Libyans in the video for "Istighlāl" (2017).

The visuals interspersed with MC Swat rapping tell a story that runs parallel to the song's lyrics. The opening skit depicts a non-Black man walking into an auto shop, where he asks a mechanic working beneath a car about some unfinished business. The mechanic responds in perfect Libyan Arabic before sliding out from under the car, at which point the first man notices that the mechanic is Black and mockingly asks him قصدك ليبي انت؟ ("Oh, so you're Libyan?") before giving him an ID and some cash and leaving.[13] As the story progresses via intercut scenes, we learn that the mechanic has been commissioned to carry out a hit on MC Swat himself. And sure enough, after he delivers the last verse, MC Swat is shown being shot point-blank by the mechanic and left to die in the street.

While the song itself provides a valid and well-received criticism of highly relevant problems, and the lyrics do not discuss race, the visual narrative culminating in the assassination of MC Swat provides a layer of commentary on Blackness in Libya. The introductory scene seems at first to be almost sympathetic in its depiction of a common

experience of Black Libyans—that of not being taken as Libyan even while speaking perfect Libyan Arabic. Read generously, this part, taken in the context of the song as a whole (which is a criticism of Libyans killing and otherwise hurting each other), could perhaps be a sort of roundabout way in which MC Swat is actually affirming the Black mechanic's Libyanness. While MC Swat blames those who kill, kidnap, and exploit for Libya's ills, he nowhere states that such people are *not* Libyan. Yet, this video does not provide any positive depictions of Blackness in a Libyan context. In fact, the mechanic's role as a hit man is parallel to a broader negative stereotype in Libya: that of Black African men as pro-regime mercenaries (مرتزقة).[14] Furthermore, this particular character assassinates not only a major rapper, but one who is associated closely with the ideals of the revolution. In addition, in the second interlude, the mechanic and his interlocutor both use an Arabic anti-Black slur (عبيد) in such a way that suggests only depictions of social reality rather than critique. The arc of the visual narrative then simply feeds into the stereotype of Black men in Libya as non-Libyan, as well as their direct association with violence through their availability as hitmen. Correspondingly, the targeting of MC Swat by a Black hitman in the video is perhaps a way of further bolstering MC Swat's own authenticity as a rapper insofar as it reflects actual threats against him which caused his flight from Libya to Europe, positions him as a potential victim of such hitmen, and even channels gun violence against major US-American rappers.

Returning to Double Y's song with which we began, we can note that though his intention is to depict racial harmony in his neighborhood, his lines in fact do just the opposite by enforcing racial categories which separate non-Black Libyans from Black Libyans, whom he refers to as "whites" and "n***as," respectively. Though these are not racial categories commonly used in Libyan discourse, and the n-word is problematically adopted here as part of the overall aesthetic of globalized hip-hop, these lines still gesture to issues of race in Libya. A separation of non-Black and Black Libyans is possible for Double Y because Blackness is held to be incompatible with Libyanness. As shown by both Ahmed Alshafee's "Kish" and MC Swat's "Exploitation," Blackness can be instrumentalized visually to provide the violent masculinity desired by two rappers as both "gangsta" aesthetic and the social context within which they perform their music.

Closing

In both the Lebanese rap battle and the Libyan music videos, Blackness is mobilized discursively and aesthetically to reinforce the boundaries of belonging to a national identity. In these mobilizations there are, of course, striking tensions. Hip hop is a set of Afro-diasporic forms of cultural expression with historical ties to Black liberation in the US. In many instances around the world, including in the Middle East and North Africa, hip hop has provided a generic ground for expressions of revolution and struggle in crucial historical moments. At the same time, as we have described, these musical genres can also be repurposed antithetically to bolster pre-existing colorism or anti-Blackness. Masculinity plays a role in these moves. In the Lebanese context, Dizaster's refusal of Edd's Lebaneseness via racist battle rap "bars" impugning his Blackness and ejecting him from the nation is just such a repurposing, one done through a hypermasculine physical and vocal gestures. In the Libyan context, Blackness is in fact incorporated into the nation, but with a hard boundary separating it from being included within what is "Libyan" and, often, as in the videos of Ahmed Alshafee and MC Swat, as a prop to express a violent masculinity. By considering these two contexts and examples together, we not only point

to those racial formations as they exist prior to the Libyan or Lebanese use of globalized media, in particular the adoption of hip hop as a musical and performance genre. Rather, we have sought to illustrate how localized understandings of color or race can prove so powerful that they can overtake the globalized forms of expressive culture, severing them from their original meanings and fusing them instead to local grammars of race or racism. Our message, then, is that scholars must attend to these twists and turns, as genres like hip hop course from context to context so that we can better reckon with the—seemingly contradictory—messages they carry along the way.

Notes

1. This section appears below. Edd Abbas and Dizaster, "Edd + Dizaster, excerpt 1," posted by Chris Nickell, YouTube video, 0:24, https://youtu.be/QWjPD4hOst4 < https://youtu.be/QWjPD4hOst4> .



2. Edd Abbas and Dizaster, "Edd + Dizaster, excerpt 2," posted by Chris Nickell, YouTube video, 0:36, https://youtu.be/rZWtINgnGyA < https://youtu.be/rZWtINgnGyA> .



3. Edd Abbas and Dizaster, “Edd + Dizaster, excerpt 3,” posted by Chris Nickell, YouTube video, 0:58, https://youtu.be/zUlly7yd5cU < https://youtu.be/zUlly7yd5cU> .



4. These gestural elements can be seen in the following excerpt. Edd Abbas and Dizaster, “Edd + Dizaster, excerpt 4,” posted by Chris Nickell, YouTube video, 0:25, https://youtu.be/7DXGMzw_au8 < https://youtu.be/7DXGMzw_au8> .



↩

5. The Druze are an ethno-religious group mostly concentrated in the Levant, distinct from both Shi'i and Sunni Islam, and one of the state-recognized sects of Lebanon's post-Civil War power-sharing government. ↩

6. See Marc D. Perry, "Global Black Self-fashionings: Hip Hop as Diasporic Space," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 15, no. 6 (2008): 635–664. ↩

7. This part of the music video appears at https://youtu.be/_L-86jedSac?t=116 < https://youtu.be/_L-86jedSac?t=116> .:



Code-switches to English are denoted by italics here. عنصورية is the term we have translated as "racism" in this context, though it bears mentioning that it has a broader meaning of "prejudice" or "chauvinism" and is often used in those ways across the Arabic-speaking world, for instance to describe the nationalist sentiment of some Lebanese nationals against Palestinian refugees and Syrian migrant workers, or for example in Libya to describe a range of sentiments such as eastern/western regionalism or anti-Amazigh discrimination. Double Y, "Double Y Mantegna 2018

دبل واي منطقتنا," posted by Shehab Sky شهاب, YouTube video, 4:14, https://youtu.be/_L-86jedSac.

8. Ahmed Alshafee, "Kish," posted by Holm Institution, July 18, 2017, YouTube video, 3:49, https://youtu.be/RDr6UHz1eu4 < https://youtu.be/RDr6UHz1eu4> .



9. "Kish", at 1:11, https://youtu.be/RDr6UHz1eu4?t=71 < https://youtu.be/RDr6UHz1eu4?t=71> . This is one of a few switches into English including the main line of its chorus.

10. "Kish", at 2:35, https://youtu.be/RDr6UHz1eu4?t=165 < https://youtu.be/RDr6UHz1eu4?t=165> .

11. See Mary Fitzgerald, "'It Shows How Desperate the Situation Has Become': The Rapper who Fled Libya," October 2, 2017, *Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/oct/02/desperate-situation-rapper-who-fled-libya-mc-swat < https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/oct/02/desperate-situation-rapper-who-fled-libya-mc-swat> and Dario Sabaghi, "From Outspoken Rapper to Refugee, the Turbulent Life of MC Swat," February 19, 2018, *Middle East Eye*, https://www.middleeasteye.net/features/outspoken-rapper-refugee-turbulent-life-mc-swat < https://www.middleeasteye.net/features/outspoken-rapper-refugee-turbulent-life-mc-swat> .

12. "MC SWAT – *Istighlal*" posted by i film, April 17, 2017, YouTube video, 6:15, https://youtu.be/apKxg1moN-U < https://youtu.be/apKxg1moN-U> . Note that the included subtitles are often incorrect, especially as regards American slang (even going so far as to incorrectly equate various Libyan Arabic terms with the English n-word).



13. "MC SWAT – *Istighlal*" posted by i film, April 17, 2017, 6:15, at 0:24 to 1:50. ↩

14. It is widely held that in 2011 Qaddafi did in fact bring in mercenaries from other African countries to help control the protests and subsequent all-out fighting. The subsequent association of Black Africans in general with non-Libyan mercenaries resulted in violence towards a number of Black men in Libya, Libyan and non-Libyan alike. ↩

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Chris Nickell received their PhD in music at New York University in fall 2019. Chris' dissertation drew on ethnographic fieldwork with participants in independent music scenes of Beirut, Lebanon to better understand how they mobilize performances of diverse musical masculinities to shore up their social status and defer threats of downward mobility. Chris is also a community organizer in Northern Manhattan and currently serves as Deputy Chief of Staff for State Senator Robert Jackson.

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Opposing A Spectacle of Blackness: *Arap Baci*, *Baci Kalfa*, *Dadi*, and the Invention of African Presence in Turkey

by Bam Willoughby | Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA), Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT The imaging of Africans in Turkey is indicative of the extant register of cultural understanding in the Turkish popular imagination regarding the imaginability, knowability, and understandability of Black form represented. In Turkish popular culture, the figures of the *arap baci*, *baci kalfa*, and *dadi* index this register. This essay takes the representation of Africans on Turkish popular television through the combined usage of blackface-like and drag-like techniques to configure the figures of the *arap baci*, *baci kalfa*, and *dadi* and juxtaposes it against the material ways Turks of African descent have found to figure themselves within the public sphere. This juxtaposition demonstrates how Blackness and Black form are not perennial processes but rather constructed measures that come into relief.

KEYWORDS Black, Blackness, diaspora, domestication, gender, race, Turkey

On a crisp January 20, 2009, across the United States, innumerable inauguration day revelries took place. The celebration at the Lincoln memorial boasted over 400,000 attendees, and the inauguration itself was the most attended in United States history. The President of the United States of America was a Black man, and his name was Barack Obama.

These celebrations were not confined by border or by time. One month after the forty-fourth president of the United States was sworn in, 5,252 miles away from Washington D.C., on the Aegean coast of Turkey, a humble yet fervent series of celebrations were also taking place. Starting February 7, and ending February 9, 2009, the *Afrikalilar Kultur ve Dayanisma Dernegi* (Afro-Turk Culture and Solidarity Organization, or AKDD) gathered together to commemorate Barack Obama's election. Though the fête did not receive much attention from the Turkish national news, one outlet did cover the event. According to a report offered by the *Turkish Journal*'s Muğla correspondent Kenan Gürbuz, signs that read "*Afro Türkler Seni Çok Seviyor*" and "*Seni Muğla'da Bekliyoruz*"— "Afro-Turks Love Barack Obama" and "We Await You in Mugla"—were hung up on the insides and outsides of the restaurant.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IMAGE_ONE_OPPOSING-Bam-Willoughby.png>

A member of the Mugla branch of the Afro-Turk Culture and Solidarity Organization smiles in front of a partial cut of the sign reading "We Wait You in Mugla."



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IMAGE_TWO_OPPOSING-Bam-Willoughby.png>

Members of the Mugla branch of the Afro-Turk Culture and Solidarity Organization stand in the outside holding a sign that reads "Afro Türkler Seni Cok Seviyor," which translates to "Afro-Turks Love You Very Much." These words are placed next to a smiling image of Barack Obama.

Gürbuz's report offers a slight glimpse into the complex ways Turks of African descent simultaneously tie themselves to Turkey and distance themselves from Turkey. His report revealed how Turks of African descent imagine themselves as both of Turkey and of "elsewhere"—of Africa and of Turkey.

In this article, I begin with background on African diaspora scholarship and the nominative challenge of identifying and naming an African diasporic community that sits outside of the traditional purview of the transatlantic slave trade, the primary orbit of African diaspora scholarship. I then move into an analysis of slavery in the Ottoman Empire and how slavery figures into the public and private iterations of African presence in Ottoman Turkey as well

as contemporary Turkey. Finally I conclude with a look at the new rituals and rites that have been established by the same communities with which I open to frame this article in order to celebrate themselves as Turkish people who are of African descent and articulate their own vocabulary of what it means to be African descended in Turkey.

Situating African Diasporas in Post-Ottoman Turkey

Recent decades have seen a rise in scholarship that has been centered on exceeding the limitations of geographies, nation-state boundaries, and ethnic and linguistic differences to answer questions of the African diaspora. This scholarship has predominantly focused on the transatlantic slave trade and as such has established a link between Black identity and the African continent. This assumes an a priori "Black"-ness identifiable irrespective of the contexts within which the individuals are situated. While such a connection is not inherently harmful, engaging the geographically specific socio-cultural and historical factors that discursively construct "Blackness" or "Black" bodies within nation-state contexts exposes the specificity of how identity emerges. The representations of Turks of African descent within the context of the Turkish nation-state provides one such example. In this, both the representations that Afro-Turks they themselves make—as in the Afro-Turk Culture and Solidarity Organization's meeting house above—as well as those caricatures made of them in mainstream Turkish popular culture are relevant. Despite the efforts of Aegean African Turkish communities and foreign researchers, dominant Turkish discourse continues to narrate the presence of "Africans" within Turkey only in terms of recent immigration.

It would be incorrect to assert that the history of Turks of African origin begins and ends with slavery. The point is not to make visible the connection between Turks of African origin and slavery. Rather it is to emphasize that the enslavement of African peoples operates as a framework within societies for which slavery was a regular practice. This metric continues to be the standard frame by which subjects of African descent are remembered. Within the field of Ottoman Studies, the vast majority of literature concerning slavery in the Ottoman empire has focused on Janissaries and Mamluks—slave soldiers taken from the Balkans and the Caucasus through the fourteenth century.[1] Africans enslaved in this realm, beyond the occasional Janissary, were the Ethiopian eunuchs used by the sultan to guard the harem.[2] Research regarding slavery that is not focused on the sultan's domestic sphere has focused on the Circassian and Georgian slaves, largely young women, that were brought into the Ottoman Empire by slave dealers for "service" in urban elite harems.[3] Analyses of the enslavement of Africans and their forced relocation that did not pertain to the sultan's personal army or personal harem are far less abundant.

Another factor that complicates research into the presence of African slaves in the context of Turkey compared with the transatlantic slave trade is that the Ottoman Empire was organized according to a framework known as the millet system, which guaranteed the protection of non-Muslim groups by the sultan. This system allowed non-Muslim groups to continue practicing their own religious rites without having to convert. Religion was the primary metric of identification within the Ottoman Empire and subjects were labeled according to religion rather than to origin. In Ottoman archives, Africans also appear according to their religious association rather than their place of origin or race. Such

archival documentation is unheard of within African diaspora scholarship of the transatlantic. In that context, subjectivation occurred through place of origin. Esma Durugönül notes that since "African Ottomans and African Turks were considered Muslims and Turks, respectively, they are, virtually statistically nonexistent in the official demographic records of the Empire and the later Republic."[4]

Thus, it is incredibly difficult to trace enslaved Africans within the Ottoman world. Sparse research and data pieced together by various Ottoman historians offer an estimated sixteen thousand to eighteen thousand men and women who were forcibly transported into the Ottoman Empire each year during much of the nineteenth century.[5] All forms of slavery in the Ottoman world were abolished at the end of the nineteenth century.[6]

Semantic Figurations of Blackness

Even though the presence of Africans in the Ottoman Empire is not a particularly constitutive part of the Turkish national historiography, the fact remains that Turks of African descent are embodied vestiges of this history. One key element of this embodiment are the semantic designations that have emerged throughout history to refer to those that are considered, for lack of a better term, as "something" "African." Such terms are *siyah*, *zenci*, and *arap*. *Siyah* and *zenci* operate as derogatory terms that specifically refer to the color black (*siyah*) and black-skinnedness (*zenci*). *Arap* on the other hand means Arab. These three terms are often used interchangeably. The distance in meaning between black as a physical color and arap as a group classification—which holds no bearing on the histories of these particular bodies—prevents siyah, zenci, and arap from collapsing into a singularly defined racially "Black" category—despite their so-called positions as people of the African Diaspora.

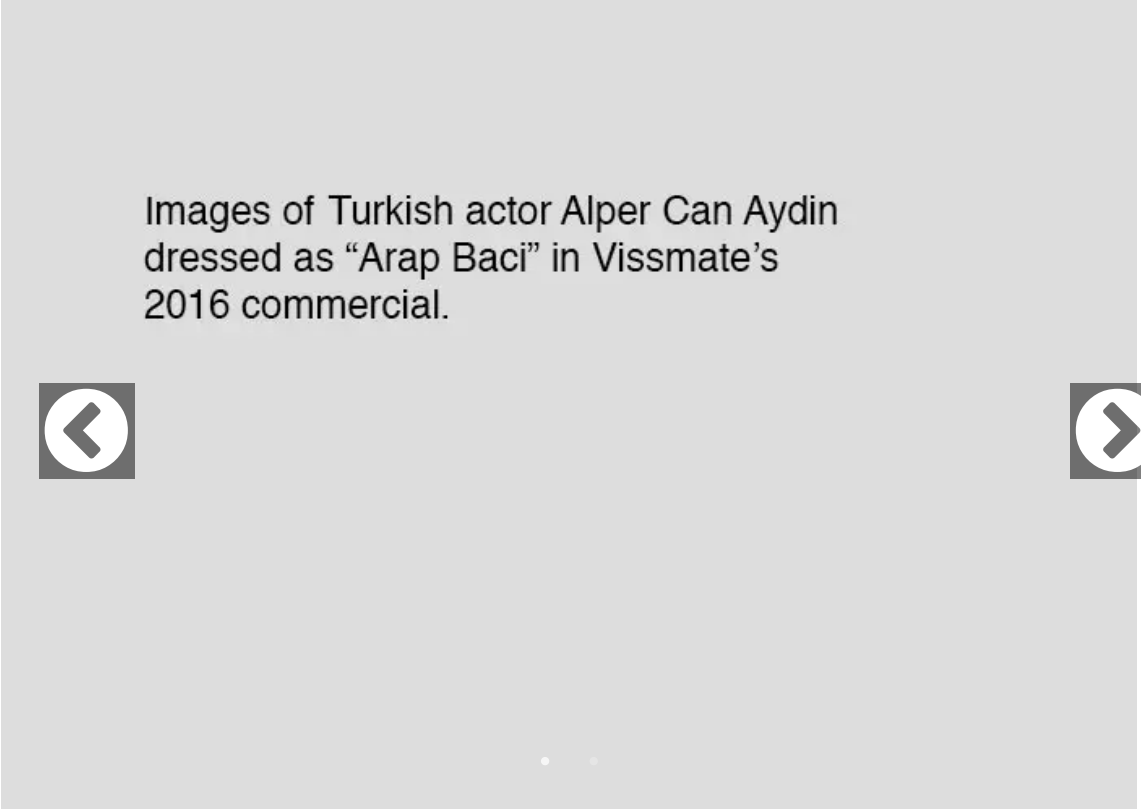
Recognizing the mobilization of these terms in everyday life helps to illuminate that there is a linguistic and social awareness of phenotypic particularity among subjects within the Turkish nation-state despite a cultural amnesia around how these subjects might have already been incorporated into the national and historical body. In the next section, I provide a visual analysis of three figures performed on Turkish television: Arap Baci, Dadi, and Baci Kalfa, as examples of how the semantic designations used to identify Africa in the Turkish imagination renders itself visible in Turkish popular culture.

Arap baci, *dadi*, and *baci kalfa* all refer to specifically gendered work titles which referred to enslaved, as well as manumitted Ottoman African women who were put to work as domestic workers. The word *baci* directly translates to "sister" and the word *kalfa* loosely translates to "journeyman." Together, the words *baci* and *kalfa* refer to a type of "sister" or "auntie" figure that took care of domestic tasks and chores within Ottoman homes. Similarly the the title *dadi* translates to "aunt."

Arap Baci, Dadi, and Baci Kalfa

In 2016, the Turkish cleaning supply company Vissmate released a commercial promoting the sale of their *Dogal Sivi Arap Sabunu* (Natural Liquid Soft Soap). The commercial is a thirty-second conversation between an off-camera voice and an arap baci. Vissmate's

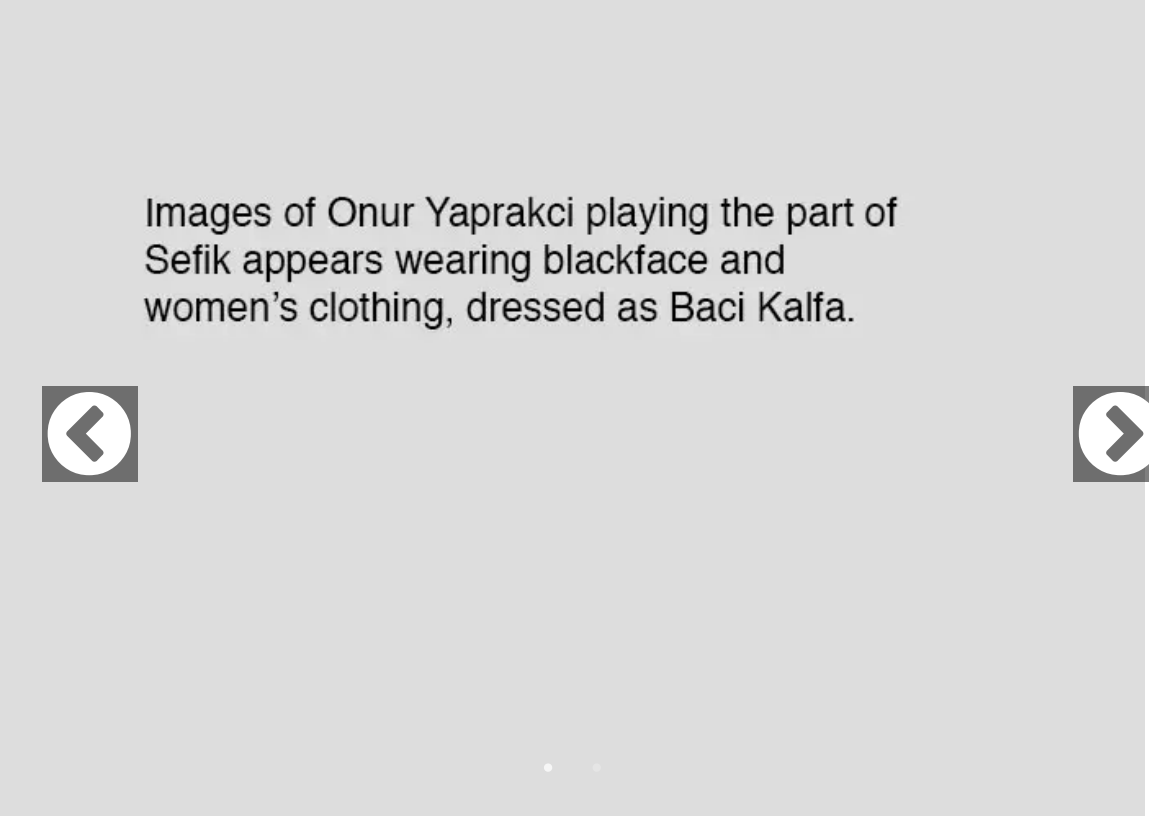
Arap Baci is played by Turkish actor Alper Can Aydin. When not costumed to signify the Arap Baci, Aydin's hair is loose-textured and grey. His body is round and fat and his skin very light brown. To become Vissmate's Arap Baci, he is covered in what appears to be dark brown—almost black—paint. A black skirt, blue floral button-up, and stockings drape his body. On his head he wears an afro-style wig.



The commercial opens with the off-screen voice saying, "We asked Arap Baci." As the camera focuses, Aydin's Arap Baci can be heard responding, "If you didn't ask me who would you ask, my child? Soft soap is 'our' business." Aydin then opens the top of the soap and inhales deeply, grinning widely as the fumes reach his nose. As he stares at the camera he blinks excessively acting, in a way, that almost seems to suggest that although he is obviously an actor within a commercial who has been hired to act out a part in a commercial, his character is somehow naïve, unaware, and has no prior acting skills. His affectations are exaggerated and his voice particularly high. Unmoving from her position on the couch, Vissmate's Arap Baci is rooted in the home. She is both domestic and domesticated. Her endearing reference to the off-camera voice as "my child" suggests that she is everyone's mother. The Ottoman classical music playing in the background contrasts the contemporary position from which the viewers are meant to look, fixing Arap Baci in an always already Ottoman past. This commercial and its construction of Arab Baci presents a cogent visual example of the ways in which blackness in Turkey is imagined.

During Ramadan of 2015, the show *Zeyrek ile Ceyrek* appeared on Turkish national television for the first time. The twenty-nine part series characterized as an "absurdist Turkish comedy" by its producers was pushed as a spin-off of the famous Turkish television series *Filinta*. Where *Filinta* follows the stalwart police officer Filinta Mustafa around nineteenth-century Istanbul as he investigates crimes and falls in love with the daughter of his arch nemesis, *Zeyrek ile Ceyrek* zooms in on the lives of Filinta's less adroit

colleagues Zeyrek and Ceyrek. In the tenth episode of the series, Zeyrek and Ceyrek's brother-in-law Sefik develops a crush on a young woman in town by the name of Gulhan. Sefik approaches her in an effort to court her, but much to his chagrin he finds that Gulhan is completely uninterested. Sefik thus devises a plan to convince Gulhan that she and Sefik are meant to be. Upon hearing that Gulhan's family is looking to hire new house help, Sefik decides to disguise himself as a potential employee, go to Gulhan's house, and apply for the position with her family. He gets the job. What is of particular interest to my analysis here is the visual signification that Sefik selects for deception.

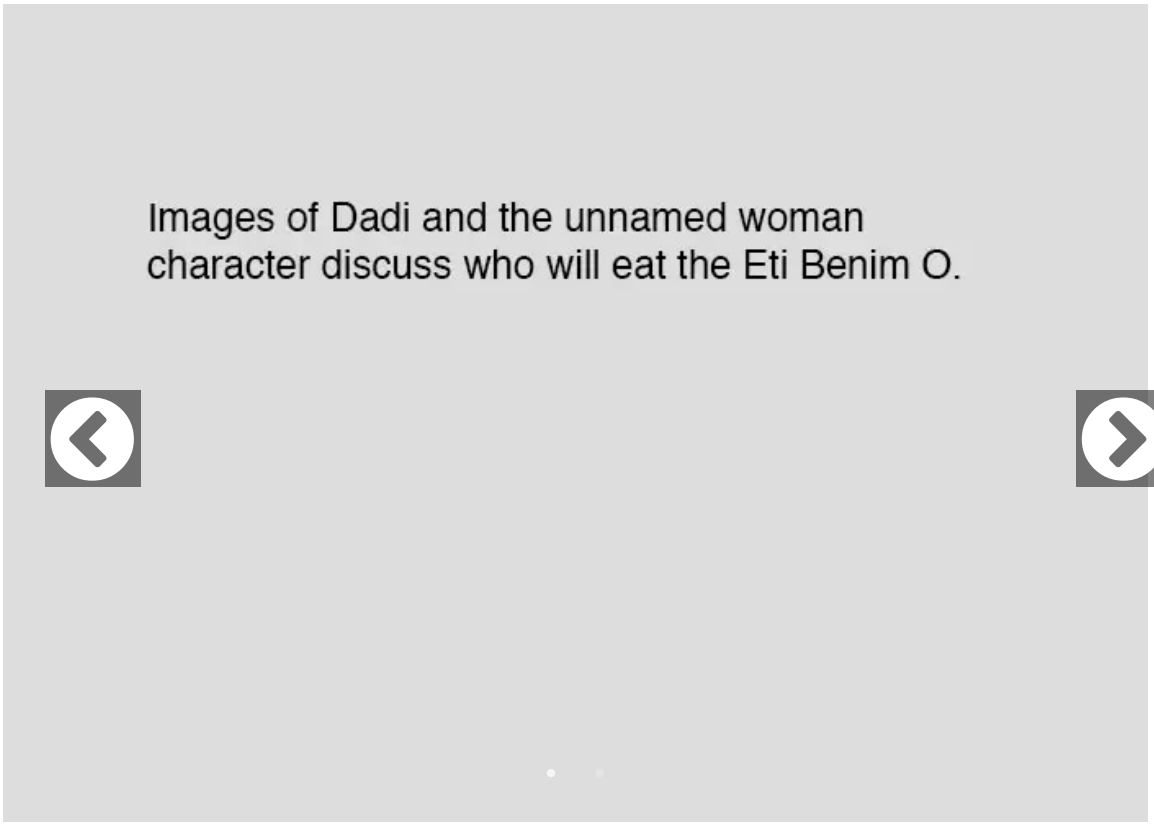


Onur Yaprakcı plays the part of Sefik. Like the actor Alper Can Adyin in the Vissmate soap commercial, Yaprakci's complexion is a very light brown. His body is large, his hair a dark brunette. Onur Yaprakci, playing the part of Sefik, disguising himself within the reality of the show as a *baci kalfa* by painting himself with dark brown (almost black) makeup, padding his stomach to create an enlarged belly, putting on a wig, and covering his head with a headscarf. Sefik spends the entirety of the episode trying to avoid detection as Sefik. I will focus here on the opening scene wherein the viewer is introduced to Sefik as Baci Kalfa. It is of particular interest for two reasons. First, it is the scene where Gulhan's family is also introduced to Sefik (disguised as Baci Kalfa). Secondly, in the background of the scene sits another Baci Kalfa. However, within the realm of the show, this secondary background Baci Kalfa is not "fake" or "pretending" as Sefik is even though she is played by a male actor.

The scene opens with Gulhan's brother asking the disguised Sefik, "Where do you see yourself in ten years?" The camera shifts to a dark, almost tar black, matronly Sefik. He wears a white scarf atop his head and a white blouse underneath a large blue sweater. He looks back at Gulhan's family and responds, "Mutfakta, banyoda, odlarada, yani temizlik ve yemegin oldu her yerde efendim" (In the kitchen, in the restroom, in the bedroom. Or

rather, wherever there is cleaning to be done or food to be made). The interview continues. Gulhan's sister asks, "You are stranded on a deserted island. What three things do you have with you?" Sefik's Baci Kalfa responds, "Bir tane mandira alirim süt ve süt mamulleri icin. Bir de firin. Eh ekmeksiz olmaz neticede" (A cow for milk, milk products, and an oven. After all you can't be without bread). Sefik in disguise goes on to add another oven as her final item because you could "never be without too much bread." Gulhan's family, delighted by Sefik's responses, urges Gulhan's younger sister to show the old Baci Kalfa the door. The Baci Kalfa on her way out is also played by a male actor in women's clothes, body padded with pillows and painted black. But unlike Sefik, within the realm of the show, *that* baci kalfa is presumably "real" whereas Sefik is merely in disguise. Therefore the displacement of the previous Baci Kalfa and subsequent replacement with Sefik's disguise suggests that a Baci Kalfa's authenticity lies in her capacity to perform a complete domesticity. Gulhan's family delights in the fact that, in ten years Sefik's Baci Kalfa sees herself in the kitchen, in the bedroom. She occupies a domesticity that projects itself into the future. Her domesticity is always already ready to be in service. This example is different than the first in that it exaggerates the Arap Baci performance of satisfaction and contentment by being connected to the home. While in the first example, the Baci Kalfa holds in her hands a household cleaning product and demonstrates sustained expertise regarding household cleaning, this Baci Kalfa is accepted because her spectacle of service renders her more real, tying a humanization of her blackness to her domestic availability.

The third and final object under my analysis is the Dadi figure embodied in a 2013 commercial released by the candy company Eti Benim O. The commercial itself is 35 seconds long.



It opens with a shot of a portly figure wearing a dark green dress, a white apron, and a white scarf. The figure's body is a dark black color that does not quite seem real. The

figure is humming, dusting a table in what appears to be a living room. A voice is heard off screen calling out to the figure. "Dadi!" it says. The voice turns into a young woman carrying a packet of Eti Benim O, approaching from some off-screen hallway. Upon arriving at the door to the living room, the young woman pauses, and says to the figure we can now understand as Dadi, "Oylesine mutsuzum ki, seninle paylasmam lazim" (I am sad that I have to share with you). She eats a piece of candy. Moving into the living room, the young woman approaches the Dadi figure. The Dadi attempts to reach for the candy but the young woman quickly pulls it away. The Dadi cries out in a familiarly high voice, reminding the young woman that she promised to share her Eti Benim O with her that day, asking "dadı,gel bugün de benimo'mu paylaşayım dedin mi ha?" The young woman refuses. In exasperation the Dadi figure drops onto the couch, wiping her forehead and crying out "Yoo bu benim alinyazim!" (Oh, this is my destiny). As she wipes her forehead, a streak of black paint comes off, revealing light brown—almost white—skin underneath. For the remainder of the commercial, the Dadi figure chases the young woman around the living room trying to obtain a piece of candy but is continuously denied.

This exchange between the Dadi and the young woman reveals the power dynamics at play in everyday blackness in Turkey that I have been examining. The young woman enters the commercial from off screen. However, for the duration of the commercial, the Dadi figure is confined to the living room. The young woman continuously denies the Dadi access to the Eti Benim O candy even though she had apparently promised to share. In this way, the Eti Benim O becomes a stand-in for pleasures that lie outside of the domestic sphere at the same time that the young woman who brings the candy becomes a stand in for those who are presumed to be deserving of those pleasures, carrying the power to grant or deny access to it. The Dadi figure is denied the pleasure of the Eti Benim O until the very end, muttering even that such a position is her "destiny." She is confined to the domestic sphere and it is from this sphere only that she is to derive her pleasure. That the Dadi figure wipes off some of her own coloring as part of the commercial suggests that what makes the Dadi believable as a Dadi within the realm of this scene, is not confined to her costuming. The wig, the dark green dress, the white scarf and apron, the dark black body paint, the high voice, and the large padding on the body all animate her as the Dadi. They also animate her position as one fixed to the domicile, as the duster. The one that can be teased with gifts that are never given is what authenticates her as the Dadi. This portrayal of the Dadi figure underscores how Africa and Blackness are made visible in the public sphere despite being rendered invisible in the private historical imagination.

Given that the characters of Arap Baci, Baci Kalfa, and Dadi are all referents that emerged out of an Ottoman history of enslaved African women used as domestic laborers, it might be easy to say that their deployment by the soap company Vissmate, the confectioner Eti Benim O, and the series *Zeyrek ile Ceyrek* is simply a recuperation of their historicity. But the figurative similarities suggest something else is at play. Yes, Arap Baci, Baci Kalfa, and Dadi all existed historically, but the particular choices that are used to bring them to life within a Turkish visual landscape obliterate their capacity to operate as innocuous historical subjects. The Arap Baci, Baci Kalfa, and Dadi figures deployed in the sites of contemporary Turkish television that I have analyzed here are not enslaved African women used as domestic laborers. They are Turkish men clad in traditionally women's clothes, adorned in wigs, and painted black. Their sole job it is to take care of the home. Their figuring ultimately reveals the way the Turkish popular imagination cannot make a feminized African figure real. She is forever a caricature whose labor makes the cleanliness and the order and the smooth functioning of a Turkish domestic sphere possible.

In the first section of this article I situated a history of Africans in Turkey within a context of slavery. I demonstrated how Africa is left out of the common memory of Turkish history yet present in the everyday linguistic referents that signal a connection to the past. In the second section of this article I analyzed scenes from three different Turkish popular television programmings—two commercials and one television show. My analysis covered the use of gender transgression as well as the use of makeup to cake each actor's body in black-colored paint, in order to address how the performance of Blackness on television screens reveals how figures of African descended people are incorporated into the popular screen. By way of conclusion, I turn to a revived celebration brought to life by the living descendants of Ottoman Africans resettled into Turkey. This celebration opposes the caricatured ways Africans are incorporated into Turkish memory by being African Turks doing the work of reviving history.

The Calf Festival

The history of African enslavement in Ottoman Anatolia turned Turkish nation-state is not only instrumentalized by Turkish culture brokers vis-à-vis Turkish television and the multi-media visual space but also by living, alive, African-descended Turkish people, operating in their own right as history brokers. One important example of this is the revival of the Calf Festival. The exact time that the Calf Festival emerged is unknown but what is revealed by the historical record is that it was the culmination of a set small festivities practiced by emancipated Africans in the Ottoman Empire. On one particular Friday, the community would gather together and decorate a calf. They would then make their way to the cemetery and surround the tomb of a person by the name of Yusuf Dede. Here the festivities would culminate and the calf would be sacrificed, its blood collected and placed in pans. Each of those present at the ceremony would then dip their fingers into the pan and mark themselves with it.[7] These activities of emancipated Africans in western Turkey continued uninterrupted until sometime between June 14, 1894 and April 22, 1895 when the governor of Izmir, Hasan Fehmi Pasha, banned the festival. The prohibition was lifted the next year but it marked the beginning of increased regulation and surveillance of communities of emancipated Africans in the Ottoman Empire. The festival was completely suppressed by the early twentieth century.

In 2011, Mustafa Olpak revived the Calf Festival in his hometown of Ayvalik, on the western coast of Turkey. Drawing upon his own research, Olpak organized a large gathering of Turks of African descent as well as non-African descended peoples to partake. A series of internet videos document the event from each year that the festival took place from 2012 to 2019. By reviving the festival, Mustafa Olpak mobilized the tools of what might be referred to as "the past" to make present his contemporary existence as simultaneously a Turkish subject, an African subject, and a subject in relation to others making meaning for themselves within a particular nation state. The Calf Festival, as a spiritual practice, as a ritual, as a rite, breaches time and takes up space. Those Turks of African descent who practice, partake in their own way of establishing their relationship to Turkey—one that requires Turks not of African descent to confront the ways they have formulated understandings of who is and who isn't, what is and what isn't, a Turkish type of thing. The Calf Festival works to revive not *history as past* but *being as present* by calling on the physical presence of Turks of African descent within a specific geography.

Reading the Calf Festival together with the commercial representations of Arap Baci, Baci Kalfa, and Dadi makes two moves. It points to how the visual landscape in Turkey hinders African-descended Turkish people—making monsters out of real enslaved African women that existed within Turkish history, on the one hand. On the other hand, at the same time, this history is being leveraged by Turks of African descent to bring themselves into presence within the Turkish popular imagination. The visual is a powerful place for Turks of African descent to display themselves and create themselves. It is a site of invention and reconstitution. The nuance in the visual rendering of these caricatured figures is understandable only within the specificity of this historical context. It behooves African diaspora scholarship to value this site of identity formation. As I have demonstrated here, discussions of Blackness outside of the context of the transatlantic slave trade provide invaluable foils to mechanisms of identity production—such as race—that are often considered already fully understood. Where we think Blackness is certain and fact, the proliferation of idioms of Blackness allow us opportunities to see otherwise.

Notes

1. Both Mamluks and Janissaries were slave soldiers but emerge in distinct times and places. The Janissaries were an institution implemented within the Ottoman Empire in the early fourteenth century under the reign of Murad I and were comprised of an elite cadre of young Christian boys —primarily from the Balkans—forcibly removed from their families and educated within Janissary academies. This sort of slavery can be named slavery that was put in service of the sultan. Mamluk slaves predate the fourteenth century but both forms were abolished by the end of the seventeenth century. Ehud R. Toledano and Y. Hakan Erdem, *Suskun Ve Yokmuşçasına İslam Ortadoğusu'nda Kölelik Bağları* (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2007). ↩

2. George Junne, *The Black Eunuchs Of The Ottoman Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016). ↩

3. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Balkan wars made it increasingly more difficult to draw Circassian and Georgian slaves into the Ottoman Empire. This resulted in a decrease in Circassian slaves as well as an increase in enslaved Africans being brought into the Ottoman Empire. Ehud R. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). ↩

4. Esma Durugönül, "The Invisibility of Turks of African Origin and the Construction of Turkish Cultural Identity: The Need for a New Historiography," *Journal of Black Studies,* 33/3 (January 2003): 289, based on Günver Günes, "Kölelikten Özgürluge: Izmir'de Zenciler Ve Zenci Fokloru" *Toplumsal Tarih* 62 (1999): 4–10. ↩

5. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*. ↩

6. As mentioned above, the past ten years have seen a rise in scholarship bringing the history of Africans in the Ottoman Empire into public discourse. Scholars such as Ceyda Karamursel, Aysegül Kayagil, and Michael Ferguson have led the charge in this regard. Ceyda Karamursel, "The Uncertainties of Freedom: The Second Constitutional Era and the End of Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Women's History* 28, no. 3 (2016): 138–161; Aysegül Kayagil, "Vocabularies of (In)Visibilities: (Re)Making the Afro-Turk Identity," *Antropologia* 7, no. 1 (2020): 1–22; and Michael Ferguson, "White Turks, Black Turks, and Negroes: The Politics of Polarization," *Jadaliyya,* June 29, 2013, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/28868. ↩

7. Michael Ferguson, *The African Presence in Late Ottoman Izmir and Beyond* (PhD diss., McGill University, 2014). ↩

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Bam Willoughby is a PhD candidate in the Africana Studies & Research Center at Cornell University. Their work variously investigates Black historiographies of Ottoman and post-Ottoman worlds, proletarianization of Africans in the Ottoman Empire, geographies of African-descended populations in contemporary Turkey, climatology and morphology, how community relationships to agricultural labor tell time, relationships between so-called Middle Eastern and so-called Western scientific discourse, and Indigenous epistemologies and how we might draw upon this data to challenge prevailing notions of Blackness and ultimately theorize what they have termed a "Black bios." Bam's dissertation investigates how the manumission of enslaved Africans in Northern Africa at the end of the nineteenth century and their subsequent relocation into Southwestern Anatolia for the express purpose of land cultivation—all within the context of their "freedom"—served as a driver for "Black" identity formation in contemporary Turkey, and provides a scaffolding for contextualizing the kinds of conditions that have made "Black" Aegean, rural, living, livelihood, and survival (im)possible in contemporary Turkey.

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Article details

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Co-Option and Erasure: Mizrahi Culture in Israel

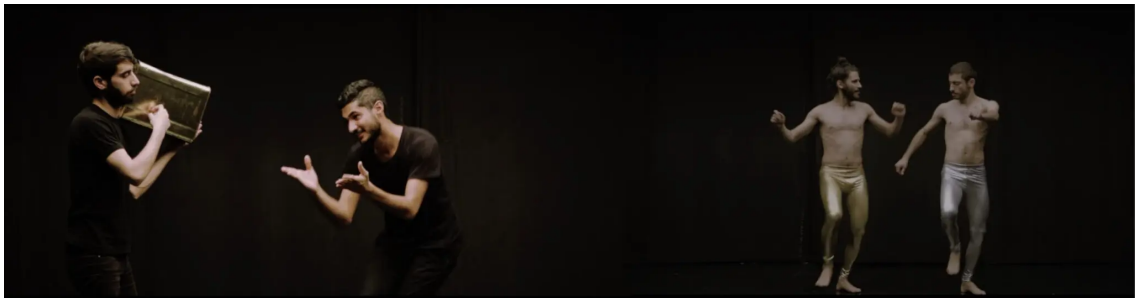
by Sascha Crasnow | Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA), Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT Much of the rhetoric around racism and racialized discrimination in Israel centers on Israeli Jewish treatment of Palestinians. However, an examination of the experience of Mizrahi Jews can also be instructive as to the ways that racism and white supremacy function within Israel—through a privileging of Ashkenazi Jews, whose experiences are used to define the contemporary Israeli Jewish experience. For example, Israeli Jewish artist of Yemeni descent Leor Grady's work addresses the marginalization, erasure, and exile of Yemeni Mizrahi Jews in Israel. In his video work *Eye and Heart*, Grady highlights how, in its absorption into Israeli folk dance, traditional Yemeni dance has been uprooted from its site of origination and "whitewashed." Through a discussion of this work and others alongside which it was shown in the exhibition *Natural Worker*, I argue that Grady's articulation of the co-option of Yemeni culture by the dominant Ashkenazi (white) Israeli mainstream demonstrates how racialization plays out in the cultural realm of Israel. This method of privileging whiteness can be seen in the Israeli co-option of other Mizrahi and Palestinian cultural elements, such as couscous, hummus, and Arabic words such as "yalla." This examination of Grady's work allows for an understanding of how this privileging of whiteness functions within the Jewish Israeli context.

KEYWORDS art, cultural appropriation, Israel, Middle East, Mizrahi, racism

Much of the rhetoric around racialized discrimination in Israel centers on Israeli Jewish treatment of Palestinians. These divisions between Israeli Jews and Palestinians are often rooted in an imaginary homogenous Israeli Jewish population in opposition to a distinctly "other," and equally homogenous, Palestinian population read as different racially (Arab), religiously (Muslim, despite a significant Christian population), and culturally (through an Orientalist lens). However, an examination of the experience of Mizrahi[1] Jews can be instructive as to the ways that racism and Zionist white supremacy function within Jewish Israeli society—through a hegemonic Israeli Jewish identity rooted in Ashkenazi[2] identification and experiences.[3] As sociologist Ronit Lentin has demonstrated, Israel's settler colonialism is implemented in a racialized fashion both with regard to the Palestinians and the non-Ashkenazi/white Jewish populations across Palestine and Israel.[4] With this in mind, this article considers the video work *Eye and Heart*, by Israeli Jewish artist of Yemeni descent Leor Grady, as well as another series of works in his exhibition *Natural Worker*. These works address the marginalization, erasure, and exile of Yemeni Mizrahi Jews in Israel. In the video work, Grady highlights how, in its absorption into Israeli folk dance, traditional Yemeni dance has been uprooted from its site of origination and "whitewashed." Considered alongside other works in the exhibition, Grady makes clear how this cultural appropriation fits into a broader Israeli erasure of the Yemeni Jewish history and presence in Israel. While Mizrahi society in Israel has been discussed by scholars such as Yehouda Shenhav, and Mizrahi confrontations with Ashkenazi hegemony

in the arts have been discussed in the context of literature and film by scholars such as Ammiel Alcalay, Kfir Cohen, Hannan Hever, Yochai Oppenheimer, and Ella Shohat, this conversation is largely absent from English-language publications on the contemporary fine arts.[5] In this article, I argue that Grady's work demonstrates the contemporary legacy of historical discrimination against and erasure of Yemeni Jews in Israel, and specifically how this discrimination manifests in culture and the arts. *Eye and Heart*, which features dance, points to the continued impact of early Zionist dance instructors and choreographers who instrumentalized the position of Mizrahi Jews as both Middle Eastern and Jewish to make a connection between the new Israeli cultural identity they were forming, largely from Eastern European immigrants, and the land of historic Palestine. This new Israeli cultural identity whitewashed Middle Eastern cultural elements, from the arts to culinary influences, to help build the image of the new Israeli Jew—an image that always had a white face, even as Israeli demographics reflected a growing Mizrahi majority.[6]



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Figure-1_-Eye-and-Heart-1-Sascha-Crasnow-scaled.jpg>

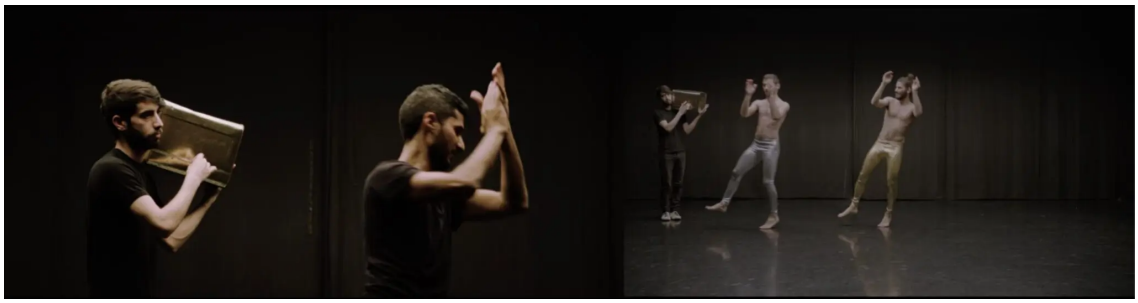
Figure 1: Leor Grady, *An Eye and a Heart*, 2016, single channel video, 03:44 min.

Eye and Heart is a single-channel video projection about three and a half minutes long that displays two shots of a theater side-by-side (Figure 1).[7] Each view includes dancers performing on a black stage in front of black curtains.[8] On the left, there are two young men, each dressed in a T-shirt and jeans, all in black. One plays a metal "drum," a large olive oil tin, creating the beat for the second man's dance.[9] While the percussionist remains standing as the other man dances, the dancer maintains a body positioning mostly turned toward the musician, engaging with him as a partner in the dance. This partnering of dancer and musician is emphasized further by their matching outfits. In contrast, on the right, two different dancers appear on the stage, shirtless, dressed in gold and silver leggings respectively. The two dance together—sometimes physically touching one another, joining hands, other times performing the same moves and steps in unison or complementary moves that respond to each other. The musician, who appears again in the same black clothing, is ignored by the two dancers. The dancers only engage with each other, not the source of their music.

While all three of the dancers are performing movements rooted in Yemeni folk dance, there are distinct differences in how the dances appear. In addition to the engagement, or lack thereof, with the musician, there is a connectedness between the dancer in black and his movements that articulates a genuine knowledge and understanding of the moves he makes, while still exuding an improvisational feel. While he does smile at times, there is a seriousness in his performance—the smile crawls across his face as he looks to the

musician, connecting his moves with the percussion. The dancers in silver and gold however, move playfully, smiling, and in some moments almost appearing to laugh. There is a silliness to parts of the dance that portray a distinct lack of seriousness, or at least lack of training in or connection to the specific moves they are performing. They appear to be playing with/at the dance, rather than performing it. The dancers' differing appearances, beyond just their outfits, hint at the reasons for the contrast in performances.

While the dancer in black has dark skin and black hair, the dancers in silver and gold are light skinned, with lighter brown hair—one of them sporting a "man bun." The dancer in black, Evyatar Said, is Yemeni, and while not trained as a dancer, he, as Grady puts it, "simply holds his history in his body as a reflection of the [Yemeni] community he grew up in."[10] For the video, Grady asked Said to improvise his dance, and the result is the performance recorded on the left. The dancers on the right in gold and silver on the other hand are professionally trained modern dancers. While one, Matan Daskal, is Ashkenazi, the other, Adi Boutrous, is a Christian Arab, though he has noted that people do not visually "read" him as Arab.[11] As such, these dancers appear as visual representations of the hegemonic Ashkenazi culture, in contrast to the Mizrahi Yemeni one represented by Said. Additionally, as "modern" dancers, they embody an Ashkenazi/European notion of modernity, positioned in contrast to non-European "tradition," such as the Yemeni dance performed by Said.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Figure-2-Eye-and-Heart-2-Sascha-Crasnow-scaled.jpg>

Figure 2: Leor Grady, An Eye and a Heart, 2016, single channel video, 03:44 min.

For Daskal and Boutrous's performance, Grady had them watch YouTube and home videos of Yemeni dance and asked them to "extract Yemeni movement phrases" in performing their "modern" dance.[12] When watching the two dances simultaneously, similar gestures and movements indicate that there is a common source material, but what is also made clear is what is lost from the movements in the "modern" dancers' variation (Figure 2). In Said's version, the movements appear intentional, purposeful despite their improvisational nature. Said performs them with conviction. In Daskal and Boutrous's version, similar movements are loose, whimsical—the fact that the dancers are improvising, or "making it up as they go along," is much more evident. This "watering down" effect that comes from the appropriation of Yemeni culture is also indicated in the choice of the gold and silver leggings worn by the modern dancers—a "'nod' to Yemeni embroidery and jewelry-making tradition, [worn] as a way to express [the dancers'] way of appropriating."[13] In the

contrasts presented both in terms of appearance and performance, the effects of appropriation on Yemeni dance and culture are articulated.

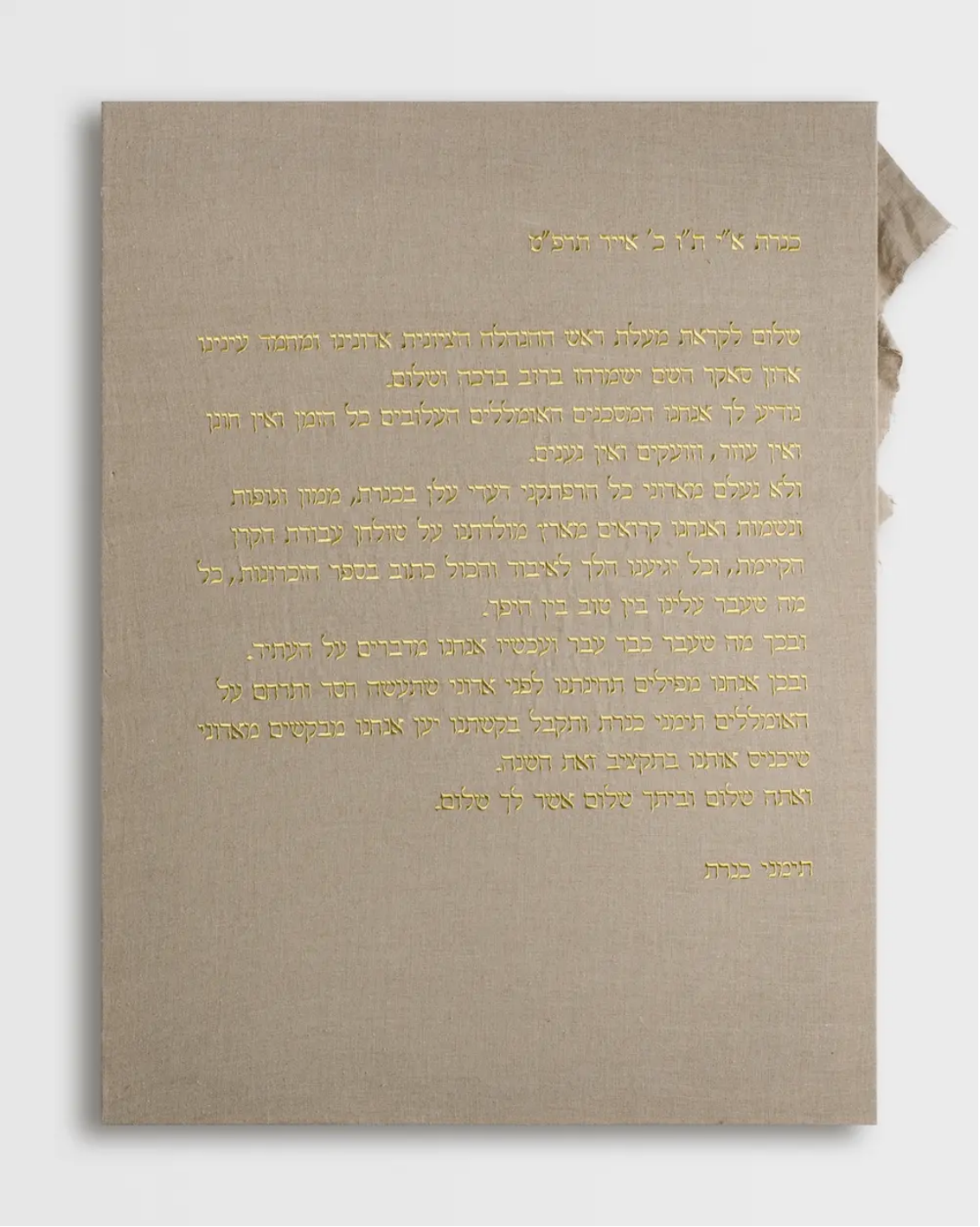
The creation of a distinctly Israeli culture was imperative in the early formation of the Jewish state. As part of this cultural development, Israeli folk dance took shape. As anthropologist Marie-Pierre Gibert has noted, "Israeli Folk Dance was literally created in the 1940s as a tool for the cultural—and largely political—construction of a 'new' Israeli culture."[14] This new cultural identity was rooted in a rejection of European influences—connected with a place of Jewish persecution—and an embrace of "Middle Eastern" influences that legitimized their presence in Palestine.[15] In terms of dance, this manifested in the appropriation of indigenous Palestinian dances, such as the *dabkeh*, which were seen as vestiges of biblical culture that had remained unchanged in the land of Palestine—ready for reclamation or "salvage" by Zionists and subsequently early Israelis.[16]

With a greater influx of Mizrahi Jews after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, in particular from Yemen, this cultural appropriation shifted towards Yemeni influences. Much like the claims that Palestinian culture was in fact an indigenous biblical culture frozen in time waiting for reclamation by Zionists in Palestine, the presence of Yemeni (and other Mizrahi) Jews in the region allowed for Jewish claims of presence and connection to the region of the Middle East.[17] Ultimately, this Mizrahi Jewish influence was foregrounded over any Palestinian one. As dance scholar Nicholas Rowe remarks, by the early 1950s, prominent Israeli folk dance instructors and choreographers "discuss the 'rich' and 'vibrant' contributions of the Yemeni Jews and give only passing mention to a vague influence of the more 'monotonous' 'Arab' dabkehs."[18]

This is not to say that this crediting of Yemeni influence was something that was a prominent feature of the Israeli folk dance that adopted it. Mizrahi cultural difference from hegemonic European Ashkenazi Jewry created a problem—while the Yemeni Jews were seen as "authentic," they were also seen as "backwards" in contrast to European modernity.[19] As such, elements of Yemeni culture were appropriated to serve the creation of an "indigenous" Israeli cultural identity, but these influences, and well as the histories of these Yemeni Jewish populations, were subsequently erased and elided to preserve an Ashkenazi dominance. This can be seen in statements by later generations of choreographers and dancers who asserted that Israeli folk dance was something that purely arose from Israeli makers. As one choreographer remarked in the 1970s: "We have the reality that we have created something from nothing."[20] Grady's video references this erasure of Yemeni influence in Israeli folk dance through the two "modern" dancers who perform without any recognition of the Yemeni musician who creates the music to which they move. Additionally, their performance of a "modern" version of the Yemeni step gestures to the hegemonic culture which places non-Ashkenazi influences and peoples as rooted in the past, and Ashkenazi appropriation of the culture and land as a modernizing project.

The exploitation of Yemeni Jews, when helpful to the Ashkenazi-dominant Zionist cause, and subsequent elision of them, was not limited to the cultural sphere. Yemeni Jewish immigration to Palestine occurred from the late nineteenth century. At various points, this immigration was even encouraged by the Zionist leadership, as they realized they could bring in Yemeni immigrants to take the place of Palestinian Arab agricultural laborers. Using Mizrahi labor was more ideal, they believed, because it promoted a Jewish dominance of the labor force, while still allowing for a profit, as these workers could be paid less than Ashkenazi laborers.[21] The Yemeni Jews were in fact referred to as "natural

workers"—individuals whose bodies and lifestyles suited the labor, had no other sources or talents for income, and required less to be satisfied.[22] This description of Yemeni Jews serves as the title for Grady's exhibition in which *Eye and Heart* was displayed. The perception that as natural workers Yemenis are without art, culture, poetry, and dance, serves as the framework his exhibition rejects.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Figure-3_-letter-Sascha-Crasnow.jpg>

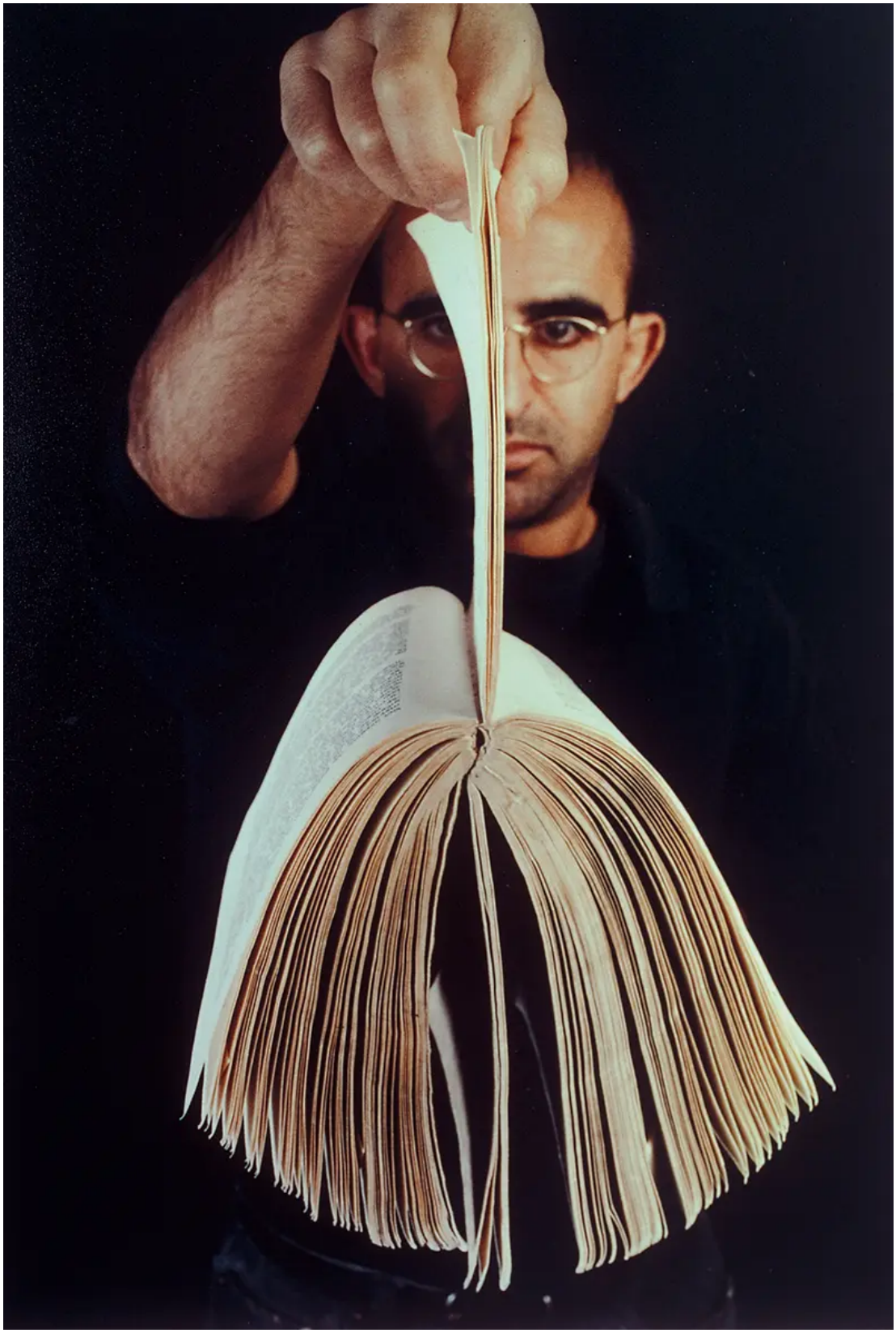
Figure 3: Leor Grady, Untitled (from the Letters series), 2016, commercial gold embroidery on linen, 90 x 120cm. Photo credit: Youval Hai.

While *Eye and Heart* demonstrates the appropriation and erasure of Yemeni culture from Israeli culture, another series of works in *Natural Worker* illustrates the erasure of Yemeni presence from certain parts of the land of Israel, as well as from its history. Among a

number of canvases displayed leaning against the gallery walls are four large-scale linen canvases embroidered with Hebrew in gold (Figure 3). The text on these works are transcriptions of four letters, correspondence Grady selected from an assortment he discovered written by early Yemeni Jewish immigrants to the Kinneret (also known as the Sea of Galilee or Lake Tiberias). Dated between 1912 and 1930, the letters consist of complaints to leaders and institutions in charge of the Jewish settlements in Palestine at the time.[23] While the letters document frustrations with the lack of support these Zionist institutions were providing, Grady notes in particular the polite, even poetic way that they were written.[24]

This population of Yemeni Jews had arrived in Palestine in 1912. A year later, a group of new Ashkenazi settlers was given the land to form an agricultural cooperative.[25] While the two groups lived side-by-side amicably for a time, by the late 1920s, a scarcity of land and resources, in particular water, resulted in the Ashkenazi settlers petitioning Zionist institutions to resettle the Yemeni population.[26] Ultimately, and in spite of letters such as the ones included in Grady's exhibition, the Yemeni Jews were moved to Rehovot (near Tel Aviv) in 1930 and made to bear witness to their erasure: as they departed, they watched the Ashkenazi settlers already begin to work their land.[27] Grady gives this erased history of the Yemeni presence in the Galilee, and the pre-Israeli state Zionist organizations' disregard for the needs and desires of this population, a place of prominence, not only through increasing the scale of these letters by embroidering them on large stretched linen canvases roughly four-by-three feet in size, but also in using gold thread. The gold, a symbol of luxury, high-status, and a reference to Yemeni craftwork, elevates these letters and the history they tell to a place of honor they never received.[28]

The letters, which tell the history of the Yemeni experience in, and expulsion from, the Kinneret, also make present voices that have been absented from the histories of early Zionist Palestine and the Israeli state. As Grady notes, in the history of writings about the Kinneret, it is Rachel the poet (Rachel Bluwstein) who is known and associated with the region. Rachel, an Ashkenazi immigrant, spent relatively little time in the Kinneret when compared with the Yemeni population; however, her history and writings are well-known today in Israel, and her association with the Kinneret is solidified through her poem of the same name. On the other hand, the legacy of the Yemeni Jewish population in the Kinneret is not recognized, in spite of the fact that they retain a deep connection to it.[29] As Grady has noted, in Yemeni neighborhoods in Rehovot to this day, there are palm trees that were brought from the Galilee, tombstones shaped like the sea, and sand brought from its shores to be placed on graves, even generations later.[30] Grady draws out the poetic nature of the Yemeni letters in order to place them in contrast to Rachel the poet. In so doing, he highlights whose history gets told, and whose does not. Rachel embodies the Ashkenazi Zionist ideal, in particular through her use of Ben Yehuda Hebrew. This new modern Hebrew was to become the national language of the new Israeli state, in contrast to the Biblical Hebrew that the Yemeni Jews used (in addition to Arabic). As such, and in spite of the Yemeni history in the area, Rachel and her poetry are centered in the history of the Galilee and early Zionist national formations.[31]



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Figure-4_9_400-final-1-Sascha-Crasnow.jpg>

Figure 4: Meir Gal, *Nine Out Of Four Hundred (The West And The Rest)*, 1997.

While Grady's work highlights the erasure of Yemeni presence in the Galilee from Zionist Israeli history, this sort of erasure is one that is pervasive when it comes to the Mizrahi community, and which has been remarked upon in works by other Mizrahi artists.[32] Meir Gal highlights the erasure of Mizrahi history in his work *Nine Out Of Four Hundred (The West And The Rest)* (Figure 4).[33] The work is comprised of an image and accompanying text. In the image, what the artist refers to as a "photo performance," Gal holds up the official Israeli textbook on the history of the Jewish people used by high school students, including the artist, in the 1970s.[34] He clasps the book, holding it up between his fingers by a handful of pages, allowing the thick text to splay out on either side, the two halves appearing like drooped wings, weighted down by the heft of the remaining pages.[35] Gal is holding onto the book by the nine pages that make up the discussion of non-European contributions to Jewish history included in the text. As noted in the title, this is only nine out of the four hundred pages that make up the tome. The remaining pages, as indicated by the subtitle of the work, comprise the majority of this history—that of European/Ashkenazi Jews. As Gal notes in the text that accompanies the image, his "intention is to put an end to the speculative character of the argument whether or not Mizrahim have been discriminated in Israel."[36] Grady's exhibition too highlights that this is a history that continues to be erased.[37] The impact of the historical erasure that Grady's letter canvases bring to the fore is evident in the resultant textbooks that are used in Israeli schools, featured in Gal's work, and the continued influence on Israeli arts and culture, made evident in Grady's *Eye and Heart*.

Despite the fact that Mizrahi Jews make up half of the population in Israel, Ashkenazi identity, history, and claims to culture continue to dominate.[38] From the start, the Zionist project was an Ashkenazi one, only utilizing Mizrahi labor and culture as best served it. As Middle Eastern studies scholar Joseph Massad has noted, "The Zionist movement's European identity was asserted from the outset in its classic texts. Theodor Herzl declared that the Jewish state would serve as 'the portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism.' When discussing Jewish immigration, he spoke only of European Jews."[39] Discrimination against Mizrahi Jews was also clear from the early stages of immigration to Mandate Palestine and later Israel. In addition to being relocated like the Kinneret Yemeni settlers, Mizrahi arrivals to Israel were placed in poor conditions upon arrival, many of them being directed to transit camps, a liminal site that often became a multi-year residence. At the same time, Ashkenazi immigrants were given former Palestinian homes.[40] Meanwhile, Mizrahi immigrants were also subjected to humiliating and dangerous "cleansing" procedures—such as the use of DDT to "disinfect" immigrants, and the practice of "kidnapping . . . hundreds of Yemeni children from transit camps in Israel and giving them to childless Ashkenazi couples for adoption."[41] Mizrahi immigrants were given poorer land, fewer social services, and lower wages; gaps in salary, employment, and education between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Israelis persist to this day.[42] Likewise, governmental support has favored Ashkenazi lifestyles, as cultural studies scholar Ella Shohat has highlighted: "The government . . . subsidizes certain basic dietary staples, one of them being European-style bread; the pita favored as a staple by both Sephardim [here used interchangeably with Mizrahi] and Palestinians, meanwhile, is not subsidized."[43] At all levels of Israeli society, government, and culture, an Ashkenazi dominance prevails at the expense of Mizrahi, as well as Palestinian, populations.

Leor Grady's video work *Eye and Heart* and the letter canvases exhibited in *Natural Worker* make clear the cultural and historic influences of the Yemeni population on the Israeli state and formation of Israeli national identity. They also highlight how Yemeni culture and history has been appropriated and elided. In the relationship Grady sets up between the

cultural appropriation of Yemeni dance into Israeli folk dance, embodied by his video, and the erasure of the historic Yemeni presence in the Kinneret, articulated in his embroidered linen letters, the artist demonstrates how Israel's national identity and contemporary reality rest on a persistent erasure of its Yemeni (and more broadly, Mizrahi and Arab) influences.[44] As the works highlight, the formation of the new Jewish state and a national Israeli identity centered around a European (white) Jewish identity, despite this formation's reliance on non-Ashkenazi labor and culture.

In considering the white European roots of Ashkenazi hegemony in Israel, and taking into account the white supremacy that dominates in the English-speaking world (the primary audience for this article), it is impossible to ignore that the white supremacy that exists in the these regions (Europe, the United States, and Canada) is also distinctly anti-Jewish. However, while this aspect of Euro-American white supremacy does not manifest in the context of Israel, the rhetoric from the founders and historical leaders of the Zionist movement and the history of Ashkenazi treatment of Mizrahi Jews in Israel makes clear the racialized nature of the Zionist project.[45] It is not incidental that, for example, American alt-right white nationalists cite Israel as an example of the "ethno-state" that they seek in the United States.

It must also be noted that the racist discrimination against Palestinians in Israel is not limited to the Ashkenazi Jewish population. In fact, as anthropologist Smadar Lavie has shown, while the Ashkenazi population tends to vote for the "Left" in Israel, the Mizrahi majority population overwhelmingly votes for right-wing politicians.[46] This tendency appears to be rooted in a desire to gain greater power within the Israeli context through affirming Jewish religious affiliations over racial Arab ones, something into which the right-wing parties feed. Right-wing government investment in the lower-class communities of the Mizrahi population, as well as support of its culture "as long as it [Mizrahi culture] avoided connecting its own Arabness with that of the Palestinians" has contributed to this support.[47] Anecdotally, Mizrahi Israelis have noted that those who have been able to integrate themselves into Ashkenazi culture, in sacrifice of any Arab identification, have most been able to benefit from improved status within Israel.[48]

In a 2019 opinion piece for *Al Jazeera*, Tony Greenstein, a British anti-Zionist Jew and founder of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, compared the Mizrahi population to the poor white population in the United States—while they are oppressed by the dominant (white) population, they displace this frustration onto an alternative scapegoat, encouraged by the right wing—African Americans and Latinx individuals in the US, and Palestinians in Israel.[49] While Greenstein uses the comparison of Mizrahi Jews to the poor white population in the United States to argue that the Jewish nationalist project is Jewish-supremacist, rather than white supremacist, I contend that in the context of Israel, these go hand-in-hand. The Mizrahi population's desire to distinguish themselves from the Palestinian population and improve their position is a desire for proximity to power in Israeli society—a position rooted in white Ashkenazi identification. Within the context of Israel, Ashkenazi hegemony references a distinctly ethnic/racial identification—it is rooted in white supremacy. The historic entrenchment of Israel's national identity in Ashkenazi (white European) superiority and dominance is important to draw out, as Leor Grady's work does, in order to understand the roots of the Zionist state, and the nuances in which racist practices manifest throughout Israel and the Palestinian Territories. In the face of more overt instances of racial discrimination in arenas like policy, the arts and cultural appropriation can appear to be less urgent sites of intervention. However, as Grady's exhibition *Natural Worker* makes clear in the inclusion of *Eye and Heart* alongside the letter canvases, the

arts and culture are spaces where the legacy of more overtly discriminatory policies can insidiously manifest. The erasure of these histories and cultural influences both serve to create and reaffirm a notion of Israeli identity that is rooted in Ashkenazi whiteness, perpetuating an Ashkenazi white supremacy in Israel that allows for racially discriminatory policies to persist.

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Notes

1. Of Middle Eastern descent. ↩

2. Of (largely Eastern) European descent. This excludes Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, who are classified as Sephardic Jews. Sephardic and Mizrahi are sometimes used interchangeably, and sometimes Sephardic is associated with a set of differentiated (from Ashkenazi) religious practices rather than ethnic affiliation. For robust discussions of the histories, usages, and differentiations between these terms, and others that have been used, see Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2009); Harvey E. Goldberg, "From Sephardi to Mizrahi and Back Again: Changing Meanings of 'Sephardi' in its Social Environments," *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 1 (2008): 165–188; Smadar Lavie, "Introduction," in *Wrapped in the Flag of Israel: Mizrahi Single Mothers and Bureaucratic Torture*, revised ed. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 1; and Ella Shohat, "The Invention of the Mizrahim," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 5–20. ↩

3. In the United States, a related but different manifestation of the dominance of Ashkenazi (white) Jewishness as the presumptive Jewish identity is referred to as Ashkenormativity. Other non-Ashkenazi Jewish populations could also serve as examples of the varied ways racism manifests within the Jewish population and government of Israel, perhaps most notably the Ethiopian Jewish population. For a discussion about this population, see Uri Ben-Eliezer, "Multicultural society and Everyday Cultural Racism: Second Generation of Ethiopian Jews in Israel's 'Crisis of Modernization,'" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 5 (2008): 935–961; Steven Kaplan and Hagar Salamon, "Ethiopian Jews in Israel: A Part of the People of Apart from the People?" in *Jews in Israel: Contemporary Social and Cultural Practices*, ed. Uzi Rebhun and Chaim Isaac Waxman (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2004); Nissim Mizrachi and Hanna Herzog, "Participatory Destigmatization Strategies among Palestinian Citizens, Ethiopian Jews, and Mizrahi Jews in Israel," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35, no. 3 (2012): 418–435; and Durrenda Ojanuga, "The Ethiopian Jewish Experience as Blacks in Israel," *Journal of Black Studies* 24 , no. 2 (December 1993): 147–158. ↩

4. Ronit Lentin, *Traces of Racial Exception: Racializing Israeli Settler Colonialism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018). ↩

5. For a social history of Mizrahi Jews in Israel see Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: a Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). On literature, see Ammiel Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Kfir Cohen, "Mizrahi Subalternity and the State of Israel: Towards a New Understanding of Mizrahi Literature," *Interventions* 16, no. 3 (May 4, 2014): 380–404; Hannan Hever, "We Have Not Arrived from the Sea: a Mizrahi Literary Geography," *Social Identities* 10, no. 1 (2004): 31–51; and Yochai Oppenheimer, "Mizrahi fiction as Minor Literature" in *Contemporary Sephardic and Mizrahi Literature: A Diaspora,* ed. Dario Miccoli (London: Taylor

& Francis Group, 2017). On film, see Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).

6. While the majority of the world's Jews are white/Ashkenazi, the majority of these reside outside of Israel, while the majority of Mizrahi Jews, who make up the minority of the world Jewish population, live within Israel—making up half of the population there. Recently, imagery coming out of Israel has become more inclusive of Mizrahi faces. However, the motivations behind this, to refute international (especially American) claims that Israel is white supremacist/racist/settler colonial through a demonstration that the population includes non-white Jews, has been criticized as "Mizrahi-washing." For a longer discussion of this, see Lihi Yona, "Mizrahi-Washing: The New Face of Israeli Propaganda," *+972 Magazine*, June 25, 2020, https://www.972mag.com/mizrahi-washing-hasbara-israel-propaganda < https://www.972mag.com/mizrahi-washing-hasbara-israel-propaganda> .
7. The first time this work was shown was as a two-channel video installation. Since then it has been shown with the two dances side-by-side as a single channel video. Email from Grady to the author, March 4, 2020.
8. The dances were filmed at the Inbal Dance Theater in Tel Aviv.
9. Grady notes that historically, Yemeni Jews avoided the use of "real" instruments as a way to mourn the destruction of the biblical temple, instead using found objects, such as the olive oil tin. Email from Grady to the author, December 4, 2019.
10. Since the making of the video, Said has become much more interested in dance, and now gives workshops on modern Yemeni dance. Email from Grady to the author, December 4, 2019.
11. Gili Izikovich, "This Israeli Arab Artist Doesn't Want to Be Labeled 'The Arab Choreographer,'" August 27, 2018, *Ha'aretz* https://www.haaretz.com/life/MAGAZINE-please-don-t-label-this-israeli-arab-artist-the-arab-choreographer-1.6415739 < https://www.haaretz.com/life/MAGAZINE-please-don-t-label-this-israeli-arab-artist-the-arab-choreographer-1.6415739> .
12. Skype conversation between Grady and the author, November 22, 2019, and email from Grady to the author, December 4, 2019.
13. Email from Grady to the author, December 4, 2019.
14. Marie-Pierre Gibert, "The Intricacies of Being Israeli *and* Yemenite. An Ethnographic Study of Yemenite 'Ethnic' Dance Companies in Israel," *Qualitative Sociology Review* 3, no. 3 (2007): 104.
15. Nicholas Rowe, "Dance and Political Credibility: The Appropriation of Dabkeh by Zionism, Pan-Arabism, and Palestinian Nationalism," *Middle East Journal* 65, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 364–366.
16. This notion of a culture frozen in time unchanged is also a common colonialist framework imposed by colonizers on the culture of the colonized—seen as "primitive" and "backwards" in contrast to the colonizers' "modernity." Rowe, "Dance and Political Credibility," 365.
17. The 1950s in particular brought Mizrahi Jews to the new state of Israel, from "places such as Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Bulgaria, former Yugoslavia, and India." Note that the definition of Mizrahim can include not only Jews from Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa, but also Turkish, Persian, South Asian, and Balkan Jews. Lavie, "Introduction," 1.
18. Nicholas Rowe, *Raising Dust: A Cultural History of Dance in Palestine* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 89.
19. Sivan Rajuan Shtang, "Strange Bouquet—on Leor Grady's Works," in *Leor Grady: Natural Worker*, trans. Sivan Raveh (New York: Sternthal Books, 2018), 24. Exhibition catalogue.
20. Rowe, *Raising Dust*, 90.

21. Gershon Shafir, "The Meeting of Eastern Europe and Yemen; 'Idealistic Workers' and 'Natural Workers' in Early Zionist Settlement in Palestine," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 13, no. 2 (1990): 176–77. ↩

22. Skype conversation between Grady and the author, November 22, 2019, and Shafir, "Meeting of Eastern Europe and Yemen," 180. ↩

23. Email from Grady to the author, January 2, 2020. ↩

24. Skype conversation between Grady and the author, November 22, 2019, and email from Grady to the author, January 2, 2020. ↩

25. Gabriel Piterberg, "Domestic Orientalism: The Representation of 'Oriental' Jews in Zionist/Israeli Historiography," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23, no. 2 (1996): 140. ↩

26. Piterberg, "Domestic Orientalism," 140. ↩

27. Piterberg, "Domestic Orientalism," 140. ↩

28. Ouzi Zur, "Tel Aviv Art Show Shines Spotlight on the Rejects of the Zionist Consensus," January 14, 2017, *Ha'aretz*, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/.premium-art-show-shines-spotlight-on-zionist-consensus-rejects-1.5485396 < https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/.premium-art-show-shines-spotlight-on-zionist-consensus-rejects-1.5485396> . ↩

29. Skype conversation between Grady and the author, November 22, 2019. ↩

30. Skype conversation between Grady and the author, November 22, 2019. ↩

31. Skype conversation between Grady and the author, November 22, 2019. ↩

32. While Grady focuses on this particular moment in Yemeni Jewish history in Israel, it is one of a series of significant moments in this history. Two other particular moments worth noting are Operation Magic Carpet (1949–1950) when forty-nine thousand Yemeni Jews were brought to Israel and the "Yemenite Children Affair" when large numbers of Yemeni, Mizrahi, and Balkan Israeli children (officially at least one thousand, with some speculations of as many as 4,500) went missing. ↩

33. My thanks to Leor Grady for introducing me to this work. ↩

34. Meir Gal, "Nine Out Of Four Hundred (The West And The Rest) 1997," https://www.meirgal.com/#/nine-out-of-four-hundred-1997 < https://www.meirgal.com/#/nine-out-of-four-hundred-1997/> . ↩

35. Gal, "Nine Out Of Four Hundred." ↩

36. Gal, "Nine Out Of Four Hundred." ↩

37. Gal, "Nine Out Of Four Hundred." The full text that accompanies the image to comprise the work is reproduced here:

Since the establishment of Israel we have heard mostly from and about its European (Ashkenazi) Jews. Numerous books and articles have depicted the State of Israel as a country which has successfully managed to bring together people of different ethnic origins. Unfortunately, these publications have created a perception that is far from the realities non-Ashkenazi groups have had to endure. Mizrahim (Jews of Asian and African origins, and Arab Jews, commonly referred to as Sephardim) who have written extensively about the discrimination against Mizrahim in Israel and who have documented the history of Mizrahi resistance have been censored and criticized. To this day, Mizrahi activists in Israel are marginalized and often excluded from public positions and funding.

The official textbooks on the history of the Jewish people used in Israeli schools are dedicated almost exclusively to the history of European Jewry. For decades the Ministry of Education systematically deleted the history of Jews who came from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. These books helped establish a consciousness that the history of the Jewish people took place in Eastern Europe and that Mizrahim have no history worthy of remembering. The origins of this policy date back to the mid 1800's to the Ashkenazi treatment of the Mizrahi diaspora prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. Both Jewish European communities as well as the Jewish Eastern European leadership in Palestine (and later in Israel), categorized non-European Jews as backward and primitive. Cautionary measures in the form of selective immigration policies were enacted in the 1950's in order to reduce the "dangerous Levantine influence" of non-European cultures on the new Israeli entity.
Mizrahim historically suffered no contradiction between being a Jew and an Arab simultaneously. The advent of Zionism and the establishment of the Israeli State drove a wedge between Mizrahim and their origins, and replaced their Jewish – Arab identity with a new Israeli identity based on European ideals as well as hatred of the Arab world. From the moment of their arrival in Israel, Mizrahim were forced to deny their Jewish-Arab identity which they had held for centuries in Arab countries and in Palestine. The inevitable outcome was an irreconcilable Mizrahi denial of its own past which gradually evolved into self-hatred. The severe racial conflict within Israel, its resulting class division as well as its impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is absent from most discourse on Middle Eastern history and politics.

The book shown in the photograph is the official textbook of the history of the Jewish people in recent generations that was used by high school students (including myself) in the 1970's. The nine pages I'm holding are the only pages in the book that discuss non-European Jewish history. Hence the title: Nine Out of Four Hundred (The West and the Rest). My intention is to put an end to the speculative character of the argument whether or not Mizrahim have been discriminated in Israel. Today the Ministry of Education continues to erase the history of its non European Jews despite the fact that they comprise more than half of the Israeli population. This is only one example of how the State of Israel continues to minoritize its non-European majority.

38. Lavie, *Wrapped in the Flag of Israel*, 1.

39. Interestingly, as Massad goes on to note, Algerian Jews were included in Herzl's definition of European Jews. Joseph Massad, "Zionism's Internal Others: Israel and the Oriental Jews," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 54.

40. Massad, "Zionism's Internal Others," 56–57. When Mizrahi immigrants were given permanent homes in former Palestinian housing, oftentimes multiple families were placed into the same home under the assumption that these were their typical living conditions. Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19/20 (Autumn 1988): 18.

41. Massad, "Zionism's Internal Others," 56–57. For more on transit camps, see Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 8–9.

42. Yona, "Mizrahi-Washing."

43. Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel," 22.

44. While the experiences of various Mizrahi populations upon arrival to Israel have been different, and the difference in their experiences important to note, since the 1980s, Mizrahi as a collective term has been utilized productively to think about these collective, while differentiated, experiences in contrast to those of Ashkenazi Jews in Israel. As Sami Shalom Chetrit has noted, "The new self-coined term, *Mizrahim*, heard since the early 1980s together with the appearance of a new *Mizrahi* political discourse, is mainly a social-political term, based to a lesser degree on ethnic origins. The starting point for those calling themselves Mizrahim is a view of Israeli society in terms of economic and cultural oppression of non-Europeans by Europeans in general, and of Mizrahim by Ashkenazim in particular." Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict*, 40. Taking this into consideration, it is worthwhile examining Grady's work through both the lens of the historical context of the Yemeni experience in Israel, and particularly the Kinneret, as well as the broader contemporary realities (effected by their historical roots) of Mizrahi Jews in Israel more broadly.

45. There are differences in how Mizrahi Jews are racialized and classed depending on their country of origin as well. For more on this, see Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus*, 5–13. Though as Bashkin also notes, these various Mizrahi communities also have shared/parallel experiences.

46. Smadar Lavie, "Mizrahi Feminism and the Question of Palestine," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 65–66. For more about the history of Mizrahi involvement in electoral politics in Israel see Sami Shalom Chetrit, "Mizrahi Politics in Israel: Between Integration and Alternative," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no. 4 (2000): 51–65.

    It is interesting to note that, according to Grady, the Yemenis in Rehovot, the descendants of the Kinneret Yemeni population, still traditionally vote Labor (center-left). Skype conversation between Grady and the author, November 22, 2019.

47. Lavie, "Mizrahi Feminism," 68.

48. "Israel's Great Divide," *Al Jazeera World*, July 13, 2016, https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2016/07/israel-great-divide-160712124159372.html < https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2016/07/israel-great-divide-160712124159372.html> .

49. Tony Greenstein, "Why Israel is a Jewish, not a White Supremacist State," *Al Jazeera*, February 7, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/israel-jewish-white-supremacist-state-190207100801951.html < https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/israel-jewish-white-supremacist-state-190207100801951.html> .

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Thaumaturgic, Cartoon Blackface

by Parisa Vaziri | Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA), Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT This essay explores how a particular medium—the comic—exposes the limitations of conventional narratives about sīyāh bāzī (Persian blackface) and hājī fīrūz (a famous blackface figure). Many commentators disavow the racial connotations of sīyāh bāzī and hājī fīrūz, concocting pseudo-historical genealogies that link the improvisatory tradition and figure to pre-Islamic practices; commentators thus repress the tradition's obvious resonances with the history of African enslavement in Iran. Through a close reading of a comic strip from a 1960s Persian periodical, I argue that historicism is an inadequate framework for adjudicating sīyāh bāzī's racial or "nonracial" character. Instead, I suggest that cartoon Blackness is always already racial, since the comic form depends upon a process of simplification that is at the heart of racialization.

KEYWORDS blackface, Blackness, cinema, comics, Haji Firuz, Iran, Persian, racialization

In a brief, unexceptional comic strip published in the Iranian magazine *Sipīd ū Sīyāh* (white and black) on the occasion of the final day of the 1965 Persian New Year, four half-page cartoon images framed by simple square panels overlay discrepant temporalities and caricatured modes of New Year festivity. Above or below each panel, short captions correlate the images with imaginary social spheres: "the *fukuls*' New Year" (sīzdah bidar-jhīgūlhā [fukulī-hā]), "the provincials' New Year" (sīzdah bidar-i umulhā), "the tough guys' New Year" (sīzdah bidar -i jāhilhā), "the opium addicts' New Year" (sīzdah bidar -i ham shīr-i hā [taryākīhā]). Fukul, from the French "faux col" is a derogatory term for someone infatuated with the West as well as a blanket Persian term for youth 1950s subculture.[1] The fukuls panel appears first in the sequence and contains just one balloon of Persian script. Instead, aggressively absurd all caps pinglish phrases are scrawled across dancing youths' polo tee-shirts. As with the other panels, the cartoonist captures the mobile fukulīs in mid-dance. The tilted hips, arched backs, and gestural hand outlines of the female figures in the "tough guys" and "provincials" squares indicate vague Eastern styles of dance (one kneeling man in the "provincials" cartoon orders his wife to "dance like they do in the cinema but just for me"). By contrast, the fukuls move with elongated limbs simulating movements suggestive of nondescript mid-century Western-style pop dancing (figure 1).



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Figure-5-Lateral-parisa-vaziri-edited.png>

Figure 1. The "fukuls" panel (*Sipīd ū Sīyāh*, 1965).



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Figure-1-Lateral-parisa-vaziri-edited-copy.jpg>

Figure 2. Hājī Fīrūz and Amū Nowrūz interrupt the fukuls panel with their gaze.

Apart from the falsely celebratory, deeply sinister ethos and univocal chromatic scheme, the consistent element connecting the panels across gutters is Hājī Fīrūz and Amū Nowrūz, a pair of icons associated with the Persian New Year—one in blackface, the other white. In the "provincials" and "tough guys" panels, Hājī Fīrūz shakes his tambourine and

dances enthusiastically with Amū Nowrūz, dissolving into the plane of action, while in the fukuls frame, the pair's concerned faces peer over the jagged horizon of a mountainscape that folds depth of field (figure 2). Hājī Fīrūz's enlarged white lips curl downward in a frown, while Amū Nowrūz raises one brow over his bulging eye sockets, forming the only moment of reflexivity—therefore, of interruption— in the series.

An enigmatically global phenomenon, blackface practices are rarely studied in comparative contexts. Where they are, scholarship often assumes a modern North American origin, or argues for its worldwide spread as effects of colonialism and imperialism.[2] By contrast, the insularity of the Persian narrative regarding traditional figures like Hājī Fīrūz and the blackface protagonist of the improvisatory *sīyāh bāzī* (black play) tradition oscillates between unsophisticated historicism and wild speculation. By virtue of its form, the 1965 comic strip offers a more dynamic approach to interpreting the history of Persian blackface, suggesting an intrinsic relationship between comic form (exemplified by the comic strip) and blackface.

The stock types identified by the *Sipīd ū Sīyāh* comic (fukul, umul, jāhil, and indeed, Hājī Fīrūz) are ubiquitous clichés in one of the most important contemporaneous cultural forms of 1960s Iran: *fīlmfārsī*, a generally disparaging term for Iranian commercial films of the period. Despite the impending dissolution of traditional figures like Hājī Fīrūz and Amū Nowrūz that the 1965 comic communicates, Hājī Fīrūz and sīyāh bāzī (the larger improvisatory tradition of which he forms a part) flourished within the Pahlavi-era cinematic mode of fīlmfārsī. Sīyāh bāzī's transition from a centuries-old tradition of improvisatory street theater to film, television, and published periodicals like *Sipīd ū Sīyāh* and *Tawfīgh* conjures a peculiar transmedial force to this indigenous blackface tradition. I suggest that, in part because of their roots in caricature, the comic strip form shares with both the Persian improvisatory tradition of sīyāh bāzī and the commercial phenomenon of fīlmfārsī an essence to the transmediality of blackface comedy that reflects its meaning as racial. This connection between comics and the racial revolves around the reduction of human complexity intrinsic to the process and functioning of both comic form and of racialization.[3] We might call this reduction thaumaturgic, alluding to the strange "alchemy" in which simplification conditions conceptualization, identification and "closure" in the process of comic meaning making.[4]

Generally held in disrepute by the Iranian middle classes and the scholars who tend to represent and reproduce their interests and investments in respectability, fīlmfārsī, like the obscure comics found in Pahlavi-era reader digest genre magazines such as *Sipīd ū Sīyāh*, has rarely formed an object of sustained inquiry. Where it has, scholars have focused on the reproduction of more obviously culturally relevant stock figures like the jāhil (tough guy, or thug) represented by the *Sipīd ū Sīyāh* comic, a postwar fantasy form of warrior masculinity comparable to the idealized *lūtī*, *ayār*, and *javānmard* common to Persian literary and visual culture. (Rūstam and other epic heroes of Firdawsī's *Shahnamah* are its prototype.) Traditional forms of masculinity were revamped and revitalized by famous fīlmfārsī stars like Behrūz Vūsūghi in *Ghaysar*.[5] Or, scholars have concentrated on the omnipresent dancing female body, also foregrounded in the *Sipīd ū Sīyāh* strip when it is evoked by a man's demand to his wife to do a private "cinema dance" (taraqus-i sīnamāyī bukun).[6] Recent scholarship agrees upon a certain incongruity between the Pahlavi nationalist project and the fīlmfārsī genre. Fīlmfārsī reflects neither the political preoccupations of national unification and ethnic homogenization, nor the opposing views of radicalized Shi'i inspired politics, but a kind of alternate technological venue for

fantasies of the good life channeled through American-style consumerism and collective desire.[7]

If blackface persists in fīlmfārsī, then, it is unlikely due to a simplistic synchronic correspondence with the racial dislocative nationalism of the time period.[8] Rather, this persistence must be comprehended through a more complex kind of temporal configuration that is suggested by the comic form. Sīyāh bāzī shares no simple analogy in other forms of ethnic denigration because, first and foremost, blackface is a global, rather than uniquely Iranian phenomenon—unlike the anti-Arab sentiment that theorists of nationalism isolate as the most characteristic form of modern Iranian racism. (Blackness, lacking a robust, or systematized repertoire of iconography in Western Asia, gets subsumed into Arabness wherever the Arab is conceived as a racial other; in Turkish, for example, "Arap" can be a derogatory term for Black people. And yet, the language and framework of anti-Arabness fails to account for why Arabs have their own repertoire of denigrating iconography for Blackness.) Thus, rarely have analyses of "race" in the Iranian context been pursued from a point of view that could be called Black, that is, informed by a consciousness surrounding the global history of Blackness.[9]

The perception of sīyāh bāzī's history is clouded by the fact that improvisatory traditions, like myth and ritual, naturally lack systemic textual traces or scripts.[10] Though scholars generally agree that documentary evidence for sīyāh bāzī appears only in the Safavid period (around the sixteenth century), they also suggest a much deeper, probably pre-Islamic genealogy dovetailing with nowrūz-bāzī (New Year festivities) to which Hājī Fīrūz and other traditions like *asb chūbī*, and *kūsah bar nishīnī* belong.[11] In the absence of documentary certainty, obscure and ideologically-driven genealogies are not difficult to craft; in the case of Hājī Fīrūz, a shifty origin reaching back to Sumerian mourning rituals supply Iranian nationalists with a uniquely Persian defense of the blackface tradition that purifies its history and conveniently disavows, to this day, its contamination with histories of African slavery and anti-Black racism.[12]

A genre of *taghlīd* (literally, imitation), sīyāh bāzī emerges out of a comedic form analogous to mime, and its historical practitioners, like the mimes of antiquity, played a crucial role in shaping political communication between the populace and court in the absence of contemporary media circuitry and apparatuses.[13] *Sipīd ū Sīyāh* hardly exemplifies the politically subversive potential of sīyāh bāzī in its 1965 comic strip, all the more understandable since Hājī Fīrūz, though arguably an iteration of sīyāh bāzī, generally lacks the latter's embedding into story plotlines and potential for political bite. Nevertheless, an imprecisely satiric, if conservative pathos coalesces through the visual commentary of the sequential imagery, affirming sīyāh bāzī's inherent, if degraded politicism. This politicism—like his mythical origins— is usually, and myopically, claimed by commentators of the tradition to mark an exceptionalism that defends against accusations of racist caricature.[14]

In the *Sipīd ū Sīyāh* weekly, Hājī Fīrūz bears witness to the simultaneous antagonistic temporalities embodied by modernity. Like a bleeding panel,[15] his sad, interruptive gaze in the first image drags through and portends the doom suggested by the latent misery in subsequent scenes. Hājī Fīrūz's iconicity, therefore, is not merely mimetic, for it underlies the entire structure of the comic form, even in the taryākī-hā (opium addicts) frame from which he is notably absent. Drawing upon the involvement of early American animators in vaudeville entertainment, Nicholas Sammond has identified blackface minstrelsy as the origin and creative source of the animation industry more broadly.[16] In the *Sipīd ū Sīyāh* comic, sīyāh bāzī characteristics vitalize even the areas of the image apparently

unconcerned with blackface. Solecistic thought balloons mimic the mutilated speech of sīyāh bāzī, where the sīyāh, incapable of pronouncing proper Persian sentences, replaces consonants like *shin* with *se* and *lam* with *re*.[17] In the comic, slurred words indicate drunkenness, and grammatical inversions affirm the backwardness of the "provincials"—infiltrating space with the malapropic effects of sīyāh bāzī, and of Hājī Fīrūz (who is otherwise silent in the cartoon).

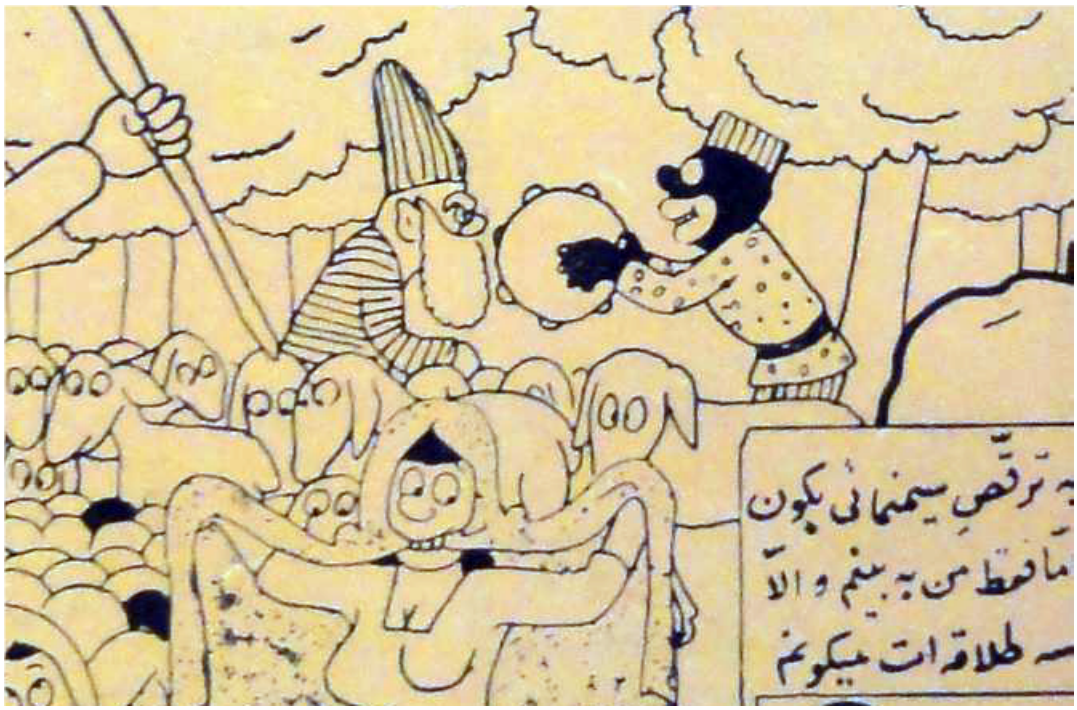
It is not surprising that Hājī Fīrūz should spread sīyāh bāzī blackface elements to areas of the comic unconcerned with Blackness. Unlike film, television, and other time-based media, the comic form spatializes and *gathers* time in one place; it is a visual medium capable of holding together multiple elements—temporalized by the gutter, or gap between panels—on a single page. In this sense, the comic strip form is peculiarly qualified to represent the temporal disjunctiveness of Iranian modernity that the cartoon flagrantly mocks, as well as the peculiarly abiding force of a Blackness that not only keeps watch over this disjunctiveness, but symbolizes, reflects upon disjunction itself.

If each panel represents a distinct, internally differentiated temporality, the first panel signals the mood or mode through which they should be read. But Hājī Fīrūz's concerned gaze does more than set a mood. *Simplification*, the condition of possibility for the cartoon image—*and* of entry into the conceptual—is doubled, strengthened in this strip by Hājī Fīrūz's blackface, that is, by a cartoon representation of a cartoon representation of Blackness. In other words, there is an enigmatic dimension to the 1965 comic embedded into the very practice of blackface that the comic's sīyāh bāzī content represents. This enigmatic dimension is an expression of the *cartoon essence of the human subject* motored in the panels by the automated movement of non-choreographed dance. It comes through perhaps most inauspiciously in the addicts' panel, where the oblivious figures hang lifelessly on strings handled by a puppeteer who charges "one shahi" for each shake, revealing the edges of a distinction between the animate and inanimate that Blackness reduces, absorbs, and hyperbolizes.

Iranian critics contemporaneous with the commercial mode of fīlmfārsī generally agreed with Western film theory about the worthless cliché trafficking exemplified by the stock characters of fīlmfārsī who are represented by the comic.[18] Critics as contextually disparate as Amīrhūshang Kāvūsī and Gilles Deleuze concede that rather than enrich and inspire, clichés stunt and seal our perceptual capacity.[19] Indeed this disdain of the cliché traces back to antiquity; Plato famously derided theater, but especially, improvisatory theater for its capacity to reproduce that "fretful part of us" prone to imitation and theft.[20] It is precisely this vulnerability of the human subject available to reduction, repetition, re-animation, and therefore to a revelation of inauthenticity and self-difference that the blackface of sīyāh bāzī holds and wields as a thaumaturgic force underlying the comic. The sīyāh is the *mark* of comedy, and not merely an aberration of the genre or one among other versions of it.

The placement of dancing Hājī Fīrūz in the panels representing folk strata of society (the tough guys and the provincials) suggests his naturalized relation to traditional Iranian culture, whereas his reflexive placement in the fukuls panel, where he regards the jiving fukulīs alongside Amū Nowrūz with dismay, suggests Hājī Fīrūz's incongruity with and impending extinction in the modern. The panel thus roots sīyāh bāzī in the immemorial time of tradition, and suggests its disappearance, rather than birth, in modernity, reversing the usual chronology and trajectory of influence framed by stories of blackface transnationalism. But the point that is made in placing Hājī Fīrūz in the sole position of

reflexivity is even more complex. Just as the fīlmfārsī stereotypes are not pure representations of traditional roles, but uniquely modern mediations (the postwar jāhil model of masculinity is a case in point), the global apparition of blackface minstrelsy can only be partially understood with the tools provided by historicism, diachrony, chronology. What the comic suggests is that Hājī Fīrūz, and the blackface tradition that he represents, become legible as such, through a disruptive encounter, in whose wake sīyāh bāzī is neither placeable as traditional nor modern, ancient or new: it is made into a *problem* contemporaneous with the emergence of such distinctions. Rather than a prosaic, staged encounter between tradition and modernity, then, we can read the 1965 comic as a relation between (innocent, uncontaminated, traditional) sīyāh bāzī and the racialized blackface minstrelsy represented by the fukuls who champion Western modernity. On such a reading, sīyāh bāzī's meaning would no longer lie simply in the past nor in the present, in its purportedly pure Persian origins nor in a supposedly contaminated form, but somewhere suspended in relation to a future signaled by Hājī Fīrūz's sequential placement on the horizon. There sīyāh bāzī awaits not its extinction, but the ever deferred arrival of its authenticity and truth.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Figure-4-Lateral-parisa-vaziri.png>

Figure 5. Cropped section from "The provincials' New Year." Hājī Fīrūz and Amū Nowrūz dance in the background, while a woman does a "cinema dance" for her husband in the foreground. The animal figures mock and liken the "provincials" (umuls) to unthinking sheep.

From the standpoint of the comic's audience, there is no "good" frame in the comic strip; each box evokes a morally undesirable position and degraded social class. The umuls are hypocrites: the wife dancing cinematically lifts her chador over her breasts to reveal a low cut dress; a manager reprimands his servant for adding oil from his own company brand in

the family's food; veiled women are juxtaposed with sheep (figure 5). The jāhils are illiterate; the fukuls are spoiled and oblivious. In this context, wholesome Hājī Fīrūz and Amū Nowrūz appear as the wisest, least degraded characters of the group. Yet unlike the other stock types, who, even in the cliché-saturated fīlmfārsī mode appear with greater nuance than expressed by the comic, caricature is the dominant, even sole mode through which Blackness ever appears in Iranian cultural forms. The hegemony of caricatural or cartoon Blackness suggests less that the cartoon is itself a racial medium or formation, than that racial Blackness can only ever be expressed through the simplifying gesture at the origin of the cartoon. This is the primary point that defenders of blackface practices, when connecting it to nonracial origins and prehistory, misunderstand. As scholars of visuality and Black representation troublingly show, the gesture that strips physical reality down to its bare anthropomorphic elements is the same gesture that renders Blackness visible as racial (it is the same, implicitly reprehensible, and dangerous, model of perception that colorblind rhetoricians imagine they avoid by claiming they "do not see" race.)[21]

Notes

1. The popularization of the Persianized "*fūkūlī*" from the French word for false collar (*faux col*) is sometimes attributed to Jalāl al-i Ahmad's 1962 *Gharbzadigī*, or *Westrickenness*. Reprint, Qum: Nashr-i Khurram, AH 1390 {2011 CE}. ↩

2. Catherine M. Cole, "American Ghetto Parties and Ghanaian Concert Parties: A Transnational Perspective on Blackface," in *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*, edited by Stephen Johnson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 224. Some scholarship connects American minstrelsy to early modern European contexts (George F. Rehin, "Harlequin Jim Crow: Continuity and Convergence in Blackface Clowning," *Journal of Popular Culture* 9, no. 3 (1975): 682–701; Robert Hornback, *Racism and Early Blackface Comic Traditions* (Springer International Publishing, 2018); Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages: 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). ↩

3. What is the racial? What is racialization? We do not arrive at satisfactory answers by consulting textbook definitions, which are hopelessly mired in contradiction. For example, Robert Miles, one of the first sociologists to historicize the term argues that racialization "alludes to the historical emergence of the idea of 'race.'" Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 2003), 102. However, what one means by "historical emergence" shifts depending upon one's orientation toward the meaning and genealogy of the concept of race. For my purposes here, I understand the "racial" as originally rooted in the reduction of human complexity to hierarchized differences based upon real or imagined characteristics, parts—like perceived skin color— that stand in for wholes. ↩

4. On closure as a form of alchemy, see Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (Northhampton: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), 73. ↩

5. For a relatively recent study of fīlmfārsī, see Pedram Partovi, *Popular Iranian Cinema Before the Revolution: Family and Nation in FīlmFārsī* (New York: Routledge, 2017). Minoo Moallem suggests that the circulation of this type of masculinity via traditions such as *naghali*, contributed to the formation of revolutionary subjectivities. Minoo Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Politics of Patriarchy in Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015). Hamid Naficy translates the jāhil as "thug" and suggests his correlation with modern, post-World War II forms of masculinity. Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 2: The Industrializing Years, 1941–1978 (Durham*: Duke University Press, 2011), 266 ↩

6. Ida Meftahi, *Gender and Dance in Modern Iran: Biopolitics on Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2016). The ubiquitous female dancer is a phenomenon paralleled in Egyptian cinema and attests to the infiltration of Egyptian melodrama prior to Iran and Egypt's political tension after the 1952 revolution. ↩

7. Partovi, *Popular Iranian Cinema*, 16. Rather than an accessory of Pahlavi nationalism, Golbarg Rekabtalaei similarly identifies fīlmfārsī as a site of contestation to the modernity imposed by top-down nationalism. Golbarg Rekabtalaei, *Iran Cosmopolitanism: A Cinematic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 186.)

8. On dislocative nationalism, see Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

9. A case in point is Neda Maghbouleh's *The Limits Of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race* (Stanford University Press, 2017), which, symptomatically, includes virtually no analysis of anti-Blackness, despite the North American geographical context within which the study is situated.

10. Muhammad Bāqir Anṣārī, *Namāyish-i Rūhawzī: Zamīnah va 'Anāṣir-i khandah'sāz* (Tihrān: Shirkat-i Intishārat-i Sūrah-Mihr, 2008), 44. Ya'qūb Āzhand, *Namāyishnāmah'nivīsī dar Īrān, az Āghāz tā 1320* (Tihrān: Nashr-i Nay, 1993), 15. Bahrām Bāyzāī, *Namāyish dar Īran* (Tihrān: Intishārāt-i Rawshangarān va Muṭāla'āt-i Zanān, 2000), 47. Mahmūd Ṣābirī Khūrzūqī, *Namayish-i Kumidī Dar Īrān* (Tihrān: Āfarīnah, 1999), 29. Like Willem Floor, Mahmoud Haery suggests taghlīd (the larger genre of improvisatory theater of which sīyāh bāzī constitutes one form) originates prior to Islam, only to be reanimated in the Safavid period, while Ghafārī admits sīyāh bāzī's "date of appearance is unknown." Willem Floor, *The History of Theater in Iran* (Washington, D.C: Mage Publishers, 2005), 200; Mahmoud Haery, "Ru-howzi: The Iranian Traditional Improvisatory Theatre," (PhD diss., New York University, 1982), 20; Farukh Ghafārī, "Evolution of Rituals and Theater in Iran." *Iranian Studies* 17, no.4 (1984): 372.

11. On various Nowruz traditions such as asb chubi and kūsah bar nishīni, see Hashem Razī, *Jashnhā'yi Āb: Nawrūz Savābiq-i Tarikhī ta Imrūz Jashnhā-yi Tīrgān va Āb-Pashan* (Tehran: Intishārāt- i Bihjat, 2004). Commentators generally collapse the difference between the sīyah figure of sīyāh bāzī and Hājī Fīrūz, suggesting Hājī Fīrūz is a "stock type" of taghlīd (Floor, *History of Theater in Iran*, 49) though for a divergence of opinions about the relation between taghlīd and *Nowrūz-bazi*, see Ardashīr Sālih'pūr, *Girāmāfūn va Namāyish: Tārikh-i Tahlīlī-i Taghlīd va mazhakah dar Īrān* (Tihrān: Namāyish, 2011), 66). For a suggestion that Hājī Fīrūz is itself a relic of a tradition separate from Nowruz, see Razī, *Jashnhā'yi Āb*, 202–12.

12. The linguist Mihrdad Bahār's pseudoscientific theory about Hājī Fīrūz's origins in the festival of Dumuzi fuels nationalists' rejections of Hājī Fīrūz's racist depiction in countless online forums about Hājī Fīrūz. Mihrdād Bahār, *Justārī dar farhang-i Īrān* (Tihrān: Ustūrih, 2007).

13. Anṣārī, *Namāyish-i Rūhowzi*, 43; Husayn Nūrbakhsh, *Dalqak'hā-yi mashhūr-darbārī va maskharah'hā-yi dawrah'gard az zamānha-yi dūr tā avākhir-i 'ahd-i Qājār* (Tihrān: Kitābkhānah-i Sanā'ī, 1976), 47. For the political significance of mimes in antiquity, see Szakolczai Arpad, *Comedy and the Public Sphere: The Rebirth of Theatre as Comedy and the Genealogy of the Modern Public Arena* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

14. As I argue elsewhere, this exceptionalism is belied by the fact that *all* global iterations of blackface minstrelsy have been conceived of as political forms.

15. Bleeding panels refer to panels that bleed off the page, suspending any certainty about the image's temporality.

16. Nicholas Sammond, *Birth of an Industry: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Rise of Animation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

17. Bihrūz Gharībpūr, *Ti'ātr dar Īrān* (Tihrān: Daftar-i Pizhūhishhā-yi Farhangī, 2005), 53.

18. Amīrhūshang Kāvūsī, a leading cultural critic, was first to coin the derogatory term filmfarsi, but as Parvīz Jāhid points out, critics of the 1950s and 60s almost unanimously saw filmfarsi as "hollow, vain, indecent, vulgar, and worthless." Parvīz Jāhid, *Directory of World Cinema: Iran* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 67.

19. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

20. Samuel Weber, *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 38–39.

21. For the problem of Black representation, see for example, Nichole Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2011).

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"Incommensurate Ontologies"? Anti-Black Racism and the Question of Islam in French Algeria

by Muriam Haleh Davis | Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA), Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT In recent years, scholars and activists in France and the United States have questioned whether discrimination against Muslims constitutes a form of racism. In France, some on the left have claimed that religion is a category of belief and therefore should remain separate from discrimination based on skin color or other physical characteristics. In the United States, Afropessimist approaches insist on the specificity of anti-Black racism, rooted in the historical difference between the native and slave. This article, by contrast, argues that race and religion should be studied relationally and highlights how being Muslim exceeded the frame of personal conviction in colonial Algeria, where religious identity was the basis of a political and economic project that were constructed in their wake. The works of Frantz Fanon are particularly instructive in this regard, as he insisted on viewing Blackness as fundamentally relational and also drew on his analysis of anti-Black racism in mainland France to understand the dynamics of settler colonialism in Algeria. The porous line between religious and racial categories also sheds light on discussions of sectarianism in the Middle East more broadly, as colonial regimes irrevocably shaped the contours of the nation-state that were constructed in their wake. Postcolonial sectarianism inherited the intimate relationship between race and religion constructed by empire.

KEYWORDS Algeria, anti-Blackness, Blackness, colonialism, Islam, North Africa, race, sectarianism

In the summer of 2019, a new polemic emerged around the seemingly inexhaustible topic of Islam in France. During a meeting of the summer school held by *la France insoumise*—a left-wing populist party—the philosopher Henri Peña-Ruiz argued that one had the right to be Islamophobic ("*on a le droit d'être islamophobe*").[1] Peña-Ruiz subsequently defended this statement, claiming that "it is not racist to attack (*s'en prendre*) a religion, but it is racist to attack a person because of their religion." His comments were part of a broader argument about the very nature of racial discrimination itself: racism, he claimed, was discrimination of people for what they are, not for what they believe. Therefore, critiques of Muslims as a group—like critiques of atheists—were permitted, even if one could not reject individuals because of their faith. Unlike homophobia, he argued, Islamophobia does not target people for an essential element of their identity but represents a legitimate critique of a corpus of ideas. If it may seem shocking for a leftist to uphold Islamophobia not only as permissible, but as a right which must be defended, understanding this statement requires a longer reflection on the intersection of racial and religious categories in France.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/1-Islamospehere-Online-Muriam-Haleh-Davis.jpg>

An image from *Le Figaro* magazine, no. 22754, October 6, 2017, depicting the existence of a global "Islamosphère." Image can be found at https://www.a-droite-fierement.fr/les-politiques-de-lislamosphere < https://www.a-droite-fierement.fr/les-politiques-de-lislamosphere/> (accessed January 5, 2021).

The image of a planetary network of people immediately brings to mind the global conspiracy once attributed to Jews. As Sandrine Sanos has written, "both Jews and Muslims have, in different ways, been "saturated" by an embodied identity from which republicanism demanded they must free themselves."[2] Moreover, in the leftist imaginary, revolution and emancipation are necessarily secular. Peña-Ruiz's argument, which constructs a strict partition between race (as skin color or appearance) and religion (as personal belief or theology), effectively forecloses any dialogue on anti-Muslim discrimination that borrows from the tools of anti-Black racism. Similarly, the discourse on "*Islamo-gauchisme*" (awkwardly translated as "Islamic-Leftism") has become a common insult wielded against those on the left whose allegedly pro-Islamic sympathies, evident in their critique of Islamophobia, make them the unlikely bedfellow of terrorists. Once again, (legitimate) anti-racist commitments are assumed to occupy a different analytical space from discussions on the place of Muslims in the French Republic.[3]

In the United States, a particular anti-racist commitment rooted in ontological approaches to race also highlights the political dangers of placing discussions of Islamophobia alongside anti-Black racism. Scholars who espouse Afropessimist approaches, such as Frank B. Wilderson III, view Blackness as coterminous with slavery and social death, arguing that anti-Blackness *cannot* be analogous to other forms of racism. By defining Blackness as a transhistorical ontology, they also locate this particular form of racism outside historical time since "one cannot know a plentitude of Blackness distinct from Slaveness."[4] Stated differently, the hope for the restoration of native land—present in the emancipatory horizons of current-day Palestinians, colonized Algerians, as well as other postcolonial subjects—are necessarily foreclosed to the Slave. The "ruse of analogy," Wilderson writes, "erroneously locates Blacks in the world."[5] This framework makes a distinction between anti-Blackness and anti-Black *racism;* while it acknowledges that racisms can be compared, it views anti-Blackness as a singular phenomenon that has structured the modern world and that is, unlike other forms of discrimination, based on an ontological difference rather than the drive to exploitation. Thus, even revolutionary

subjects like Palestinians are complicit with anti-Blackness in that their humanity depends on black suffering.[6] In addition to eliding the historical links between anti-colonial revolution and anti-racist struggle, this analytical approach also risks positing Muslim Arabs and Black Africans as "incommensurate ontologies."[7]

In both the French and American cases, historical circumstances have conditioned a specific reluctance to thinking about anti-Black and anti-Muslim racial projects together. In the US, the experience of chattel slavery remains the paradigm for understanding the dehumanizing effects of racism. In France, on the other hand, postwar attempts to erase the lexicon of race have led to the adoption of a Republican color-blindness. Both approaches raise deeper questions: Is it possible to consider Islam as the basis of a racial project, or has it merely operated as a marker of personal belief? When we speak of Blackness, are we referencing an epistemology that structured racial binaries? Or should the concept be reserved for the bodies that have been defined as Black by dominant schemes of racial classification?

My point in this article is not to call for comparison or to determine a hierarchy of suffering, but rather to think relationally about how anti-Muslim racism was "tied to extra- and trans-territorial conceptions and expressions" that "circulate[d] in wider circles of meaning and practice."[8] Colonial officials drafted techniques of rule based on an international circulation of ideas about racial difference and governance. Structures of anti-Black racism were articulated alongside (and sometimes against) anti-Muslim racism. The French colonial army, for example, often contrasted the docile African to the savage Arab. The years following decolonization, which in many ways signified a global struggle for racial equality, saw creative borrowings of racial categories and anti-racist strategies; Asian youth movements in Britain adopted Blackness as a political identity in the 1970s and 1980s, for example.[9] While it may be jarring for French Republicans to accept that discrimination against Muslims, much like anti-Semitism, should occupy the terrain of anti-racist struggle, Algeria's colonial history demonstrates how Islam exceeded the frame of personal conviction and formed the basis of a political and economic project. If analogizing American discussions centered on chattel slavery risks universalizing a geographically-specific understanding of race and racism, this article seeks to elucidate shifting ways Blackness has been understood and lived outside of the United States.

French Republican colorblindness and American investments in Blackness as a transhistorical ontology both foreclose the possibility of thinking historically about how anti-Muslim racism might be elucidated by studies of Blackness. In contrast, this article argues for a recovery of a more capacious, and indeed relational, understanding of Blackness by analyzing the "racial regime of religion" constructed in French Algeria and revisiting the work of Frantz Fanon.[10] When scholars in the US invoke Fanon's writings to establish the "absolute dereliction" of Blackness, they insist on an analytic divide between the native and the Slave. Yet Fanon's work borrowed from his experience of anti-black (epidermal) racism in France as he theorized the Manichean system of settler colonialism in Algeria, where the French state did not treat Islam as a question of individual faith or belief. Instead, religion formed the basis of the exclusionary legal, social, and economic binary of settler colonialism. Both as a lived experience and a mode of governance, meanings of Blackness varied dramatically as they circulated among Martinique, mainland France, Algeria, and the United States. Stretching these reflections even further, this article suggests that thinking about how racial binaries structure political projects based on religion helps shed new light on questions of sectarianism and personal status laws in the Middle East.

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It may seem counterintuitive to argue that anti-Muslim discrimination constituted a racial project in French Algeria. Yet much like anti-Semitism, the line between religion and race is more porous than the secularizing myths of colonial modernity suggest. For example, early debates on colonization flirted with the options of exterminating, assimilating, or relocating the native population, invoking comparisons between the Arabs of Algeria and the indigenous populations of the United States. The physician Eugène Bodichon argued that native Algerians would experience "self-genocide" upon contact with European.[11] In contrast, the Arabophiles who surrounded Napoleon III dreamed that the noble features of the Arab race would complement France's technical prowess and create an "Arab Kingdom." In 1870, the Third Republic reasserted a civilizing mission claiming that the progress of native subjects would occur through their adoption of French cultural mores rather than evolution within their own cultural milieu. This albeit rough sketch of the different modalities of race-thinking highlights the shortcomings of speaking of a blanket "racialization" of the Muslim population, even within one particular colonial territory. Instead, it is imperative that we account for the specific ways that racial characteristics were imparted on Muslim bodies at particular moments.

While Islam became a marker of absolute difference in the late nineteenth century, earlier histories of slavery under the Ottoman Empire point to how religion, as well as anti-Blackness, were central to the distinction between free and enslaved peoples. In the context of the Atlantic world, Blackness was synonymous with slavery as the condition of "social death," a status that Orlando Patterson defines by gratuitous violence, natal alienation, and general dishonor.[12] Unlike Wilderson, Patterson uses this notion to describe common features of various systems of bondage rather than associating it narrowly with skin color. Yet the distinctiveness of Mediterranean slavery have led some historians to argue that this term does not capture the status of enslaved populations in North Africa.[13] Moreover, even scholars in the Black radical tradition such as Cedric Robinson reject that slavery in the Mediterranean established a singular link between Blackness and enslavement.[14] In North Africa, corsairs engaged in so-called "white" slavery that targeted Europeans for economic and military motives while relying on a discourse of religious difference.[15] Christian boys, often from the Balkans, were enslaved and formed an elite corps of janissaries after conversion to Islam. Other enslaved Christians worked in the grueling domains of construction and sometimes rowed the corsair galleys. These forms of bondage existed alongside the trans-Saharan slave trade, making the question of whether Blackness was synonymous with enslavement a heated debate among historians of the region.[16] These arguments in no way deny the existence of anti-Black racism in pre-colonial North Africa, but rather highlight how skin color was conjugated alongside other factors such as religion, social standing, language, and ethnicity. It is therefore problematic to transpose Wilderson's understanding of social death—where skin color is synonymous with an ontological absence—to Mediterranean histories of slavery.

The French colonization of Algeria provided a link between the "old" colonies in the Atlantic world, which were based on slavery, and the "Second Empire," which divided humanity into the categories of citizen and subject.[17] In Algeria, it was not skin color that foreclosed access to citizenship (and the attendant economic and legal advantages), but rather religion. According to the 1865 Senatus Consulte, Algerian Muslims and Jews were required to renounce their personal status, which applied religious law (as understood by the French) in order to apply for French citizenship. This exclusion was also based on the conviction that Islamic norms of gender and sexuality—particularly polygamy—were

incompatible with the French Civil Code.[18] Yet five years later, Algerian Jews were offered citizenship *en bloc* (except in the Southern territories under military rule), and in 1889, non-French Europeans were offered French citizenship. Berbers, who were often seen as more "civilized" than Arabs in colonial ethnologies, were nevertheless denied citizenship on the basis of Islam.

A racial binary based on religion made Islam the unassimilable object for the French body politic. The legal status of Muslims dictated their access to citizenship, property, and survival.[19] They were subjected to a number of legal and economic exclusions ranging from the indigenous code of 1881, which outlined a number of infractions that were only punishable when committed by Muslims, to the so-called "Arab tax" through which the natives disproportionately financed their own occupation. It is important to reiterate that being Muslim was not a question of individual belief or religious practice—and even conversion to Christianity did not attenuate the effects of these legal structures. This suggests that discrimination against Muslims was not necessarily, as Peña-Ruiz's claims, a function of what one believes but rather operated in a similar fashion to racism, which is based on unchangeable physical features ("what one is").

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Many works in the canon of theorizing Blackness emerged from the multiple iterations of the color line debated by both colonized and black intellectuals during decolonization. A prime example of this is found in the work of Frantz Fanon, the philosopher, psychiatrist, and anti-colonial militant from Martinique who wrote about his experience of racism in France before departing for Algeria, where he ultimately supported the FLN (National Liberation Front) and became a key ambassador of the Algerian revolution in sub-Saharan Africa. His two most celebrated works, *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth,* analyze his experiences as a Black man in France and the struggle against settler colonialism in Algeria, respectively. In the introduction *Black Skin, White Masks*, he highlights that Blackness in France is experienced differently by Caribbean people and Africans. Unfortunately, this insistence on historical context and the various instantiations of Blackness is obscured by the translation of "l'expérience vécue du noir" as "the fact of blackness " in English. Borrowing from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Fanon's depiction of Blackness is fundamentally relational; even when defined as a lack of ontology, he specifies that this is only the case because of the white gaze ("Le Noir n'a pas de résistance ontologique aux yeux du Blanc").[20]

This brief Fanonian detour helps us interrogate how anti-Blackness might be used to study other forms of racism—rather than be partitioned off from colonial structures. It is telling that Fanon notes that when dealing with the police in France, it is worse to be Arab than to be from Martinique.[21] Another example of such an inversion is William Gardner Smith's 1963 novel *The Stone Face,* which describes the October 17, 1961 massacre of Algerians based on his firsthand observations. The protagonist, Simeon, is at first puzzled to find that Arabs consider him "white" after his arrival in France. He later comes to realize that "the Algerians are the n*g**** of France."[22] James Baldwin made the same observation after his time in France.[23] In these accounts, Blackness is depicted as historically contingent and necessarily relational, something that confirms Michelle Wright's observation that the fact of being black "cannot be located on the body because of the diversity of bodies that claim Blackness."[24] Indeed, there are important continuities in Fanon's two best-known works, despite their different objects of analysis. In detailing the binary aspects of the colonial world in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon refers the reader

back to *Black Skin, White Masks* in a footnote, telling us that he has already explained the "mechanism of this Manichean world."[25]

At the end of his life, Fanon opted for Algerian nationality, distancing himself from his native Martinique. While sympathetic to the Négritude moment that was in part founded by his former teacher Aimé Césaire, he ultimately disagreed with its commitment to a preexisting black essence. Instead, he adopted Algeria as a homeland, a country whose national identity was based on an Arabo-Islamic culture rather than Blackness. For Fanon, the difference between the two colonial territories was political: while leaders in Martinique, including Césaire, supported postwar reforms that granted the old colonies the status of French departments, Algerian nationalists had waged a violent war of decolonization against any vestiges of French influence. During his time in North Africa, Fanon pressed for a continental and political (rather than narrowly racial) articulation of pan-Africanism, challenging leaders who he saw as too accommodating to France.[26] His personal trajectory thus suggests that he saw Blackness as a space of political struggle against various forms of European racisms, including settler colonialism, rather than a transhistorical paradigm based on slavery. In this regards, Fanon's engagement with African and metropolitan realities made it impossible to define Blackness *only* in relationship to the historical experience of bondage. In contrast, Wilderson argues that "even as Settlers began to wipe Indians out, they were building an interpretive community with 'Savages' the likes of which Masters were not building with slaves."[27] Like Native Americans, Algerians were clearly colonized and not enslaved—an important historical difference. Yet Fanon's writings, which combine insights as to the functioning of racial formations in the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa, can also be read as a warning against the temptation to straightjacket the multiple meanings of Blackness in the singular experience of chattel slavery.

After independence, a number of Algerian intellectuals criticized Fanon for his elision of Algeria's Arabo-Islamic culture and his debt to Western thought.[28] The Algerian nation state, echoing colonialism's racialization of religion, insisted that Islam was an indelible marker of Algerian identity that was not reducible to religious belief. As the Tripoli Congress of May 1962 stated, "Islam, stripped of all the excrescences and superstitions that have smothered or corrupted it, is to find expression in two essential factors *in addition to religion as such*: culture and identity." The nationality law of 1963 once again made Muslim personal status the crux of national belonging. It stipulated that only those whose father and paternal grandfather came under the jurisdiction of Muslim personal status could become citizens. Europeans who had lived in Algeria for generations were forced to apply for citizenship on a case by case basis.

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The need to create a unitary national identity in Algeria after 1962 refashioned the meaning of Islam as well as indigeneity. The regime tended to view Berbers, who inhabited the region before the Arab conquest, as a linguistic and ethnic force of separatism.[29] In the 1960s and 1970s, Algeria adopted the mantle of Pan-Arabism as well as Pan-Africanism, a stance that sometimes led to tensions between African identity, which was often synonymous with Blackness, and its positioning in North Africa, which looked to the Middle East. Algeria used its international fame as the "Mecca of Revolutions" to address questions of anti-Blackness internationally despite the region's uneasy history of slavery. This was epitomized when the 1969 Pan-African Festival, held in Algiers, brought together radicals from around the world—including Miriam Makeba from South Africa (who

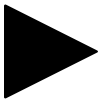
eventually took Algerian nationality) and Eldridge Cleaver from the United States—in Algiers. In her performance, Makeba sung in Arabic, proclaiming, "I am free in Algeria" (ana hurra fil-djazayir) while also noting also that "the time of slavery is over" (intaha 'asru al-'abid).

Miriam Makeba chante en Algérien - في الجـــزائ...



Miriam Makeba Singing at the Pan-African Festival in Algiers, 1969. "Miriam Makeba chante en Algérien," posted by Mabrouk Ali, July 22, 2018.

Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther 1970 - YouTube



Eldridge Cleaver fielding questions from Algerians in the 1970 documentary, *Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther*, 1:10:29.

Yet despite this revolutionary past, and the Algerian government's attempts to position the country as a leader on the African continent in recent years, there is no doubt that anti-Black racism is rampant in the country. This was most recently evidenced around the denigration of Khadija Ben Hamo, who was crowned Miss Algeria in 2019.

< https://www.facebook.com/choufchoufdz/posts/1591659824271083>

A cartoon by the Algerian artist Dilem. The title reads “Miss Algeria is the Victim of Racist Insults.” The figure on the left says “She doesn’t look like us!” and the woman on the right says, “You’re right, she’s much more beautiful!”

The long-standing notion that darker North Africans are part of a “diaspora” of slaves, rather than fully North Africa, has fed an uptake in anti-Black racism that accompanied the refugee crisis and the rise in sub-Saharan immigrants.[30] The fact that anti-Black racism exists in a country that once used anti-racism as a stamp of international revolutionary legitimacy should not lead us to conclude that this form of violence is timeless or irrational. Instead, it should compel us to interrogate the shifting and even contradictory operations of race in the post-colony.[31]

The ways in which religious divisions structured imperial belonging played a key role in the subsequent construction of nation-states, which tended to incorporate (or suppress) religious, ethnic, and/or linguistic distinctions in the service of consolidating a national identity.[32] Thinking about the intersection of racial and religious categories also allows us to revisit discussions on sectarianism, which Ussama Makdisi describes as “the deployment of religious heritage as a primary marker of modern political identity.”[33] To the extent that the designation of sects has become a “technology of recognition,” religious belongings became a matter of state governance in the Middle East.[34] This has led certain groups—such as Maronite Catholics in Lebanon—to transform their Christian identity into “a racialized worldview,” as Ghassan Hage has argued.[35] In India, the British transformed the existing caste system into a rigid set of categories that overlapped with physical markers as well as religious hierarchies. Rather than taking for granted the partitioning of

ethnicity and religion from race, we might follow the shifting bases used by empires to interpellate their subjects and revisit the criteria on which they determined sameness or difference. Postcolonial sectarianism might therefore be read as an afterlife of the regimes of religion constructed by empire rather than a trace of anachronistic modes of belonging. Instead of an analytical certainty, the tendency to posit a stark divide between race and religion should be seen as part and parcel of the secularizing myths of modernity. In discarding the commonly-held assumption that religion merely signifies transcendental concerns, we can instead turn our attention to how it was used as a form of statecraft that assigned bodies with meanings and structured access to political, economic, and social capital. In many cases, such as the French empire, this process occurred *in relation* to the maintenance of anti-Black structures. Techniques of objectification, understandings of racial hierarchies, and even vocabularies of dehumanization circulated among imperial territories, so that without posing an equivalence, we can view the establishment of racial regimes of religion alongside the drive to objectify Black bodies. Rather than representing incommensurable forms of oppression, both forms of racism generated common strategies of objectification as well as shared imaginaries of liberation.

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Notes

1. Jacques Pezet, "Qu'a dit Henri Peña-Ruiz sur « le droit d'être islamophobe » lors de l'université d'été de la France insoumise?" *Liberation,* August 26, 2019, https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2019/08/26/qu-a-dit-henri-pena-ruiz-sur-le-droit-d-etre-islamophobe-lors-de-l-universite-d-ete-de-la-france-ins_1747363 < https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2019/08/26/qu-a-dit-henri-pena-ruiz-sur-le-droit-d-etre-islamophobe-lors-de-l-universite-d-ete-de-la-france-ins_1747363> . ↩

2. Sandrine Sanos, "The Sex and Race of Satire: *Charlie Hebdo* and the Politics of Representation in Contemporary France," *Jewish History*, 32 (2018): 36–37. ↩

3. Muriam Haleh Davis, "Racial Capitalism and the Campaign against "Islamo-Gauchisme" in France." *Jadaliyya*, August 14, 2018, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/37858/Racial-Capitalism-and-the-Campaign-Against-"Islamo-Gauchisme"-in-France < https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/37858/Racial-Capitalism-and-the-Campaign-Against-> . ↩

4. Frank B. Wilderson, *Afropessimism* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2020), 217. ↩

5. Frank B. Wilderson, *Red, White and Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 37. ↩

6. Wilderson, *Afropessimism*, 15. ↩

7. Frank B. Wilderson, introduction to *Afro-Pessimism: An Introduction*, ed. Frank B. Wilderson (Minneapolis: racked & dispatched, 2017), 12. ↩

8. David Theo Goldberg, "Racial Comparisons, Relational Racisms: Some Thoughts on Method," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no. 7 (2009): 1273. ↩

9. Anandi Ramamurthy, *Black Star: Britain's Asian Youth Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2013). ↩

10. I expand on this term in my book manuscript on racial capitalism in Algeria, forthcoming with Duke University Press.

11. Benjamin Brower, "Rethinking Abolition in Algeria. Slavery and the 'Indigenous Question." *Cahiers d'études africaines* 3, no. 195 (2009): 805–828.

12. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1982).

13. Gillian Weiss, *Captives and Corsaires: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2011), 20.

14. Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983; repr., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 16.

15. Another instance of race and slavery that deserved renewed attention is the Arabian Peninsula. See Faisal Abu Al-Hasan, "Al-ʿansuriyya wa tārīkh tijāra al-rizq fī shebah al-jazīra al-arabīya," available online at https://thmanyah.com/5758 < https://thmanyah.com/5758/> , accessed on 8 September 2020.

16. Yacine Daddi Addoun has claimed that bondage in Ottoman Algeria did not necessary follow racial logics. Yacine Daddi Addoun, "Abolition de l'esclavage en Algérie: 1816–1871" (PhD diss., York University, 2010), 253.

17. Jennifer E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow, France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

18. Judith Surkis, *Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

19. Despite the colonial state's convictions that Berbers were ethnically distinct from Arabs, they, too, were excluded from French citizenship based on Islam. Muslim Algerians did not receive French citizenship until 1958.

20. Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), 89.

21. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 73.

22. William Gardner Smith, *The Stone Face: A Novel* (1963; repr. Chatham, NJ: Chatham Bookseller, 1975), 105.

23. James Baldwin, "The Black Scholar Interview: James Baldwin," *The Black Scholar* 4, no. 4 (December 1973–January 1974): 39.

24. Michelle M. Wright, *Physics of Blackness: Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 3.

25. Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (1961; repr. Paris: La Découverte, 2002), 44.

26. See Fanon's "The Stooges of Imperialism," which is directed at the African leaders who supported the French Community, a French proposal to African colonies for political association. Alienation and Freedom. Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, trans. Steven Corcoran, ed. Robert J. Young and Jean Khalfa (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2018), 661–66.

27. Wilderson, *Red, White & Black,* 46.

28. Mohamed El-Milli, "Fanon wa al-Fikra al-Gharbiya," *Thaqāfa* 1 (March 1971): 10–25. Abdelkader Dheghloul, "Frantz Fanon: L'ambiguité d'une idéologie tiers-mondiste" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Paris 5 University, 1971).

29. Berber identity has continued to be contentious during the ongoing Hirak movement in Algeria.

30. Hisham Aïdi, "National Identity in the Afro-Arab Periphery: Ethnicity, Indigeneity and (anti)Racism Morocco," *POMEPS* 40 (June 2020).

31. Muriam Haleh Davis, "Race and Decolonization in the Maghreb," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, forthcoming. https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory < https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory> .

32. Under the Ottoman *millet* system, Greeks were defined by religion rather than nationality or language. As a result, Greek Muslims were defined as Turks during the population exchange of 1923. Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 27.

33. Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 7.

34. Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*; Maya Mikdashi, "Sex and Sectarianism: The Legal Architecture of Lebanese Citizenship," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 2 (2014).

35. Ghassan Hage, "White Self-racialization as Identity Fetishism: Capitalism and the Experience of Colonial Whiteness," in *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice*, ed. Karim Murji and John Solomos (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

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Lateral

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Black Skin, White Cameras: African Asylum-Seekers in Israeli Documentary Film

by Greg Burris | Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA), Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT The recent arrival in Israel of thousands of refugees from countries like Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudan has triggered a spate of hate crimes and mob violence. Asked about these asylum seekers in 2012, Likud-party member Miri Regev called them a "cancer." For this comment, she later apologized—not to the African asylum-seekers but to Israeli cancer survivors, and she expressed regret for comparing them to Africans. Around that same time, Interior Minister Eli Yishai of the Shas Party told a reporter that "this country belongs to us, to the white man." Continuing on, he stated that he would use "all the tools [necessary] to expel the foreigners, until not one infiltrator remains." While the racial dynamics of Israel have been thoroughly examined with respect to both intra-Jewish tensions (Ashkenazi supremacy) and the Palestinian issue (white settler-colonialism), in this essay, I want to theorize Israeli whiteness with respect to the African refugees. Specifically, I will examine two recent Israeli documentaries dealing with African refugees—*Hotline* (dir. Silvina Landsmann, 2015) and *Between Fences* (dir. Avi Mograbi, 2016). Both openly demonstrate solidarity with the African asylum-seekers, but they do so in different ways, and if the former film leaves the racial hierarchies of Zionism intact, the latter works to shatter them.

KEYWORDS Africans, asylum, documentary, film, Israel, refugees, whiteness, Zionism

For a roughly eight-year period beginning in 2005, around fifty thousand African refugees crossed into Israel.[1] Most of them were fleeing war and violence in Eritrea, South Sudan, and Darfur, and their path to Israel involved an often perilous journey across the Sinai Peninsula where they dealt with hostile Egyptian authorities, harsh environmental conditions, and predatory bands of smugglers and human traffickers. Israel still refuses to classify these African asylum-seekers as refugees and instead sees them as "economic migrants" or even as "infiltrators" (*mistanenim*), a term that appears not only in right-wing hate speech but in standard Israeli legal discourse. They have been locked up by the thousands in the Holot Detention Center, an open air prison in the Negev Desert, and many have also been deported—sometimes back to the very countries from which they fled. Israel's treatment of the refugees thus flies in the face of international law, specifically the United Nations' 1951 Refugee Convention—ironically, an agreement that Israeli delegates played a key role in passing in the wake of the Holocaust.[2]

These asylum-seekers are certainly not the only Black community in Israel to have fought racial discrimination. Here, one may be reminded of the Mizrahi Jews who formed their own Black Panther Party in the 1970s or the Ethiopian Jewish activists today who decry their treatment as second-class citizens. But, as a Black community that is not even Jewish, the situation of these asylum-seekers is particularly precarious. Their plight first caught my attention in 2012. That year, there was a dramatic rise in hate speech and racist

violence against them. After one demonstration, a mob of anti-African protesters descended upon Hatikva, a South Tel Aviv neighborhood where many of the refugees live. Chanting "The People Want the Africans to Be Burned!," they bombed a kindergarten and smashed the windows of several African-run shops.[3] Around the same time, former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson Miri Regev gave speeches calling the Africans a "cancer." She later apologized for this comment—not to the asylum-seekers but to Jewish cancer survivors; she was sorry for comparing them to Black Africans.[4] Similarly, Interior Minister Eli Yishai of the Shas party told a reporter that "this country belongs to us, to the white man." He vowed to use "all the tools [necessary] to expel the foreigners, until not one infiltrator remains."[5] Here, it is worth noting that both of these politicians have their origins in North Africa. Regev's father is a Moroccan Jew; Yishai's family is Tunisian. As is so often the case, those whose claim to whiteness is the most tenuous—in this instance, Mizrahi Jews—turn out to be the racial pecking order's most virulent enforcers.[6]

But Israel's population of African refugees are not just passive victims. They have fought back, staging protests with their bodies and voices. In 2013, several hundred Africans incarcerated in Saharonim Prison went on a hunger strike to protest their unjust treatment.[7] Others took to the streets, and in the same year some twenty-five thousand people marched in the largest such protest.[8] In some instances, the refugees have created protest spectacles. At a 2018 demonstration in Tel Aviv, for instance, they painted their faces white to call attention to Israel's supremacist racial hierarchy. On another occasion, they staged a mock slave auction. This was done as a response to the Israeli government's deportation policy which effectively sought to bribe the refugees into leaving with a few thousand dollars in cash and a one-way plane ticket back to Africa.[9] Those without ownership of the media thus attempted to take command of it, and their activism did not go unnoticed. As a result of both the amplification of racism against the migrants and the increase of coordinated resistance against it, some Israeli citizens took action. Since the early 2010s, the plight of the refugees has inspired a number of philanthropic initiatives and cultural productions, including journalistic exposés, novels, and documentary films.[10] In this way, the African asylum-seekers became the subject of an Israeli philanthropic gaze: Black skins in front of white cameras.

In the last decade, there have been five Israeli documentaries produced about the African refugees: *Sound of Torture* (2013), directed by Keren Shayo; *African Exodus* (2014), directed by Brad Rothschild; *Ethnocracy in the Promised Land: Israel's African Refugees* (2015), directed by Lia Tarachansky and Jesse Freeston; *Hotline* (2015), directed by Silvina Landsmann; and *Between Fences* (2016), directed by Avi Mograbi.[11] All of these films champion the cause of the refugees, and their appearance on Israeli screens might therefore be welcomed as a humanitarian counterweight to the violent rhetoric and actions of Israel's racist Right. However, while the discourse of liberal inclusion is certainly preferable to overt bigotry, it is not necessarily all that radical. Indeed, as Wendy Brown and Ghassan Hage have argued in the context of two other white settler-colonial states—the United States and Australia, respectively—multicultural tolerance can function not to overturn existing racial hierarchies but to extend their reach. In Brown's words, "tolerance . . . manages the demands of marginal groups in ways that incorporate them without disturbing the hegemony of the norms that marginalize them."[12] Zionists, too, can play the game of multicultural colonialism, and their closet of white sheets can also contain a coat of many colors.[13]

In these documentaries, then, the belligerent language of anti-African hatred is replaced by the benevolent words of liberal tolerance, but this does not necessarily mean that

whiteness itself is challenged. Indeed, while all five of these films are critical of Israeli government policies vis-à-vis the asylum-seekers, they couch their criticisms in very different terms. If some leave the racial hierarchies of Zionism intact, others attempt to shatter them—two dueling tendencies which I will explore in the films *Hotline* and *Between Fences*. Thus, while the racial dynamics of Israel are usually examined with respect to intra-Jewish tensions (i.e., Ashkenazi supremacy) or the Palestinian issue (i.e., settler-colonialism), in this essay, I want to consider Israeli whiteness with respect to the African refugees.[14]

Hotline follows the activities of a small Tel Aviv-based non-profit organization, the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants. The women who work there face numerous hurdles as they navigate Israel's complicated and sometimes Kafkaesque bureaucracy in order to assist the refugees—in town hall meetings, in special sessions of the Knesset, and in the Israeli courts. Inspired by cinema vérité and specifically the work of Frederick Wiseman, *Hotline*'s director Silvina Landsmann sought to give viewers a fly-on-the-wall look at Israeli institutions—a style she also adopted in her earlier film *Soldier/Citizen* (2012).[15]

Hotline thus refrains from overt commentary. There are no talking heads, no charts or graphics, and no voice-over narration. Such an approach to documentary has sometimes been lauded for its ostensible neutrality. Indeed, at least one of *Hotline*'s reviewers praised the film for its "non-editorialising approach" and its "detached observational stance."[16] As is always the case, however, objectivity is not really so objective, and whether the director intended it or not, her authorial voice does emerge throughout the film.[17] Towards the end of *Hotline*, for instance, there is a very revealing sequence. A worker from the organization sits across from a refugee and listens to him recount his harrowing journey across the Sinai. They are positioned behind a partially open door, and the film frames them so that while we can clearly see the face of the Israeli, the African remains completely obscured. All we can see of him is an occasional hand gesture through the crack in the door. One can only assume that he was hidden to protect his identity, but this very deliberate framing nevertheless demonstrates a troubling tendency. The film's attention is always on white Israeli women. They are the heroes, not the asylum-seekers. *Hotline* is not a film about Black liberation; it is a film about the empowerment of white Israeli women.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Image-01-Greg-Burris.jpg>

Figure 1. The African refugee remains obscured behind the door in *Hotline*.

To be clear, my critique here should not be construed as an attack on the Hotline agency itself. Rather, my critique has to do with the way this agency is framed, the way the film foregrounds Hotline's staff members without recognizing how their positions are part of the same racial regime that oppresses African refugees. By emphasizing the Israelis' agency over that of the Africans, *Hotline* suggests that salvation can come from within Israeli civil society without in any serious way transforming that very society.

In *Hotline*, there are two major groups of antagonists. The first is the audience that viciously confronts one of Hotline's organizers in a South Tel Aviv auditorium. The crowd is mostly made up of Mizrahi women who accuse her of being a rich Ashkenazi, and one of them even curses the Hotline representative to her face: "I hope your girls get raped." Simply put, in *Hotline*, the Mizrahim are monsters. In this way, the film gets caught up in that old blame game, displacing the symptoms of structural racism onto individual scapegoats. Israel's foundational racial hierarchy—a European fantasy of phallic white supremacy—is thus projected onto the Mizrahi devils. Anti-African bigotry is ironically presented not as a problem endemic to Zionism but as a problem stemming from those Israelis who are not yet fully Israeli; the solution is not a dismantlement of whiteness but further assimilation into it.[18]

Hotline's second group of antagonists is the condescending male politicians who smugly dismiss the Hotline representative at a special session of the Knesset. One of them even jokes about deporting her along with the African "infiltrators," and his colleagues all laugh at his offensive comment. In *Hotline*, these two antagonistic groups—the angry Mizrahi women and the patronizing patriarchal politicians—end up serving the same function as the Africans; all of them are props that the film uses to bolster the heroism of white women. Thus, *Hotline* fashions itself as a social justice-minded feminist film, and it was treated as such on the international film festival circuit. If *Hotline* is feminist, however, is a very particular type of feminism—a feminism that glorifies the actions of white women

without pausing to reflect on the privilege of their racial position.[19] The Africans are treated sympathetically, but only in a way in which members of Israeli civil society emerge as the true heroes.



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Image-02-Greg-Burris.jpg>

Figure 2. Israeli politicians laughing as one jokes about deporting the Hotline representative along with the African "infiltrators" in *Hotline*.

Between Fences is a very different kind of film. Taking place almost entirely at the Holot Detention Center, the film follows a group of African refugees as they work together with an Israeli filmmaker (the director himself, Avi Mograbi) and an Israeli theater director (Chen Alon) to perform scenes of "theater of the oppressed"-style drama.[20] If other documentaries, including *Hotline*, treat the Africans primarily as victims, *Between Fences* takes a different approach, and in their interviews, conversations, and performances, the Africans exhibit fuller personalities and more creative spirits than in any of the other films. Indeed, of all of the Israeli documentaries about the asylum-seekers, *Between Fences* is the only one in which they are allowed to laugh.[21] While the film certainly does not ignore or deny the tremendous injustice these refugees face, neither does it let that injustice completely dominate them. If social justice documentaries often try to prove the humanity of their oppressed subjects, *Between Fences* presumes their humanity from the outset.[22] In a very Rancièrian way, then, *Between Fences* presupposes equality as a given.[23]

As a result, the Israelis presented in the film are not treated as particularly heroic. Their actions, including their participation in the performances and their apparent solidarity with the refugees, is not the point of the film. If anything, the film works not to glorify but to humble the Israelis—that is, to indict whiteness itself.

Unlike *Hotline*, *Between Fences* makes no claims to detached neutrality, and if Landsmann uses cinema vérité methods to disguise her own authorial presence, Mograbi does the

opposite and puts himself directly in the film. Even though he is present, however, he is not the center of attention, and when he does appear, it is often in a very self-depricating way. At one point in the film, for instance, Mograbi tells the African performers that he will not be coming to their next meeting because he has to travel abroad. Mograbi does not try to hide his privilege. He merely states the facts of the situation without trying to camouflage or sugarcoat them. By including this uncomfortable moment in the film, Mograbi invites audiences to reflect on the injustice of the situation. As an Israeli man, he can freely travel abroad, while the main stars of the film, the Africans, are stuck in the desert. This contrast between Mograbi and the Africans—between the privileged and unprivileged, between the mobile and immobile, between white and Black—could not be any starker. Mograbi thus appears to be using himself to criticize the power and privilege of white Israelis.[24]

This tactic connects *Between Fences* to Mograbi's larger filmography. Early on in the film, there is an awkwardly long sequence in which he speaks to an African refugee sitting behind a fence. It is an image that closely resembles shots in his other films. At the end of *August: A Moment Before the Eruption* (2002), for instance, Mograbi takes his camera north to Israel's border with Lebanon. On the other side of the fence, a boy looks at Mograbi while Mograbi looks at him. They exchange a few words, the boy in Arabic, Mograbi in Hebrew. The boy then shouts some slogans about Hezbollah, throws a few rocks at Mograbi, and saunters away. Similarly, the first Palestinians to appear in *Avenge But One of My Two Eyes* (2005) are also stuck behind a fence. They are workers in the West Bank, people simply attempting to go to their jobs, but Israeli soldiers have arbitrarily closed the gate shut. The Palestinians find themselves waiting with no end in sight.

In all three of these examples, Mograbi lets the camera linger on the fence—a barrier separating the Israeli from the African, the Lebanese Arab, and the Palestinian. Significantly, it is a barrier which Mograbi himself does not cross. One does not get the impression that Mograbi is looking into a cage, like a tourist at a zoo. Rather, one gets the impression that Mograbi is himself in the cage, looking out at a bigger world around him. His Israeli passport may give him certain privileges and international mobility, but in terms of his identity, he is trapped. These sequences highlight the fences, borders, and manufactured divisions that Israel has constructed between the white, Western Jew and its various racialized Others. In this way, Mograbi is once again using himself to criticize his own position.[25]



< https://csalateral.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Image-03-Greg-Burris.jpg>

Figure 3. An African refugee sitting behind a fence in *Between Fences*.

To be sure, Mograbi is not denying his own identity as an Israeli Jew, and his approach therefore stands in contrast with others like Shlomo Sand whose critical views of Zionism have led him to renounce his own Jewishness.[26] But neither does Mograbi make the mistake of so many other white activists who reject the centrality of their own identity so loudly that they ironically end up putting themselves at the center once again. If other films end up treating the African refugees as props in order to bolster existing elements of Israeli society, Mograbi's self-deprecating approach shatters this possibility. As such, screenings of his films are increasingly rare in Israel. There is little wonder, then, that while *Hotline* received top prizes at prestigious Israeli film festivals, *Between Fences* was not picked up by any Israeli distributors. It was simply far too subversive, its message far too scandalous. Israelis do not seem to have a stomach for Mograbi's documentaries, and in a recent interview, he even suggested that he makes his films for himself and for people abroad.[27] In some way, he seems to be giving up on Israeli society and along with it, the power and privilege of its supremacist racial regimes.

In this paper, I have argued that the African refugees provide an important starting point for the examination of Zionism's racial hierarchies. While some Israelis have openly opposed the presence of African asylum-seekers, others have taken a more inclusive approach. This latter group includes several filmmakers, and the documentaries that have been produced about the treatment of African refugees in Israel seek to humanize them, to criticize Israeli government policies against them, and to champion the philanthropic efforts of white Israelis. As we have seen in *Hotline*, however, such efforts easily slip into another kind of racism, and while the tone of these films sharply contrasts with that of Zionism's more explicitly white supremacist defenders, they usually fail to criticize whiteness itself. In this way, whiteness is not dismantled; it is reinforced. *Between Fences* is the exception, and rather than glorifying the position of white Israelis, this film indicts it.

Notes

1. Although I am using the term "Israel" for convenience, the territory currently administered by the Israeli government is, together with the West Bank and Gaza, part of Palestine.

2. Gilad Ben-Nun, *Seeking Asylum in Israel: Refugees and the History of Migration Law* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 19–50. See also Mya Guarnieri Jaradat, *The Unchosen: The Lives of Israel's New Others* (London: Pluto, 2017); and Sarah S. Willen, *Fighting for Dignity: Migrant Lives at Israel's Margins* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2019).

3. See Yotam Gidron, "World Refugee Week: A Community Deported, in Pictures," *+972 Magazine*, June 22, 2012, https://www.972mag.com/world-refugee-week-a-community-deported-in-pictures/ < https://www.972mag.com/world-refugee-week-a-community-deported-in-pictures/> ; and Max Blumenthal, *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* (New York: Nation, 2013), 344.

4. Quoted in Ali Abunimah, "Israeli Lawmaker Miri Regev: 'Heaven Forbid' We Compare Africans to Human Beings," *Electronic Intifada*, May 31, 2012, https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/israeli-lawmaker-miri-regev-heaven-forbid-we-compare-africans-human-beings < https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/israeli-lawmaker-miri-regev-heaven-forbid-we-compare-africans-human-beings> .

5. Quoted in Dana Weiler-Polak, "Israel Enacts Law Allowing Authorities to Detain Illegal Migrants for Up to 3 Years," *Ha'aretz*, June 3, 2012, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-s-new-infiltrators-law-comes-into-effect-1.5167886 < https://www.haaretz.com/israel-s-new-infiltrators-law-comes-into-effect-1.5167886> .

6. On the Mizrahim, see Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19–20 (1988): 1–35; and Yaron Shemer, *Identity, Place, and Subversion in Contemporary Mizrahi Cinema in Israel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2013).

7. Noam Dvir, "Saharonim Detainees Go on Hunger Strike," Ynet, June 27, 2013, https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4398026,00.html < https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4398026,00.html> .

8. Lee Yaron, "25,000 Protest in Tel Aviv Against Israel's Asylum Seeker Deportation Plan," *Ha'aretz* March 24, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/25-000-protest-in-tel-aviv-against-deportation-of-asylum-seekers-1.5938048 < https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/25-000-protest-in-tel-aviv-against-deportation-of-asylum-seekers-1.5938048> .

9. Abdi Latif Dahir, "African Migrants Are Painting Their Faces White to Stop Israel from Deporting Them," *Quartz Africa*, February 26, 2018, https://qz.com/africa/1215813/photos-eritrea-and-sudan-migrants-paint-faces-white-to-protest-rwanda-deportation < https://qz.com/africa/1215813/photos-eritrea-and-sudan-migrants-paint-faces-white-to-protest-rwanda-deportation/> ; "State Said Set to Tell High Court Migrant Deportation Deal to Uganda Still on," *Times of Israel*, April 8, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/state-to-tell-high-court-that-deportation-deal-with-uganda-still-on-report < https://www.timesofisrael.com/state-to-tell-high-court-that-deportation-deal-with-uganda-still-on-report> .

10. See the novel, Ayelet Gundar-Goshen, *Waking Lions*, trans. Sondra Silverston (London: Pushkin, 2016). First published in Hebrew in 2014 by Kinneret Zmora-Bitan Dvir (Or Yehuda, Israel). Also of relevance here is the short film *The Ambassador's Wife* (dir. Dina Zvi-Riklis, 2016), discussed in Rachel S. Harris, *Warriors, Witches, Whores: Women in Israeli Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2017), 235–36.

11. Two of these documentaries are Israeli only insofar as their directors hold Israeli citizenship. *African Exodus* was directed by Brad Rothschild, a dual US-Israeli citizen who once worked as a speechwriter for the Israeli delegation to the UN, and *Ethnocracy in the Promised Land* was co-directed by Lia Tarachansky, an investigative journalist-turned-filmmaker who grew up on a West Bank settlement before breaking with Zionism and immigrating to Canada. The Israeliness of the other three films is more firmly established. Not only were they helmed by Israeli directors, but they were produced by Israeli companies and financed at least partially with Israeli funds.

12. Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2006), 36. Likewise, for Hage, "White multiculturalism and White racism,

each in their own way, work at *containing* the increasingly active role of non-White Australians in the process of governing Australia." Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (1998; New York: Routledge, 2000), 19. Emphasis in original. See also Slavoj Žižek, "Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," *New Left Review* 1, no. 225 (1997): 28–51.

13. For an example of Zionist multiculturalism, see Gil Hochberg, "Forget Pinkwashing, It's Brownwashing Time: Self-Orientalizing on the US Campus," *Mondoweiss*, November 28, 2017, https://mondoweiss.net/2017/11/pinkwashing-brownwashing-orientalizing < https://mondoweiss.net/2017/11/pinkwashing-brownwashing-orientalizing> .

14. Recent discussions of race in Israel include Ronit Lentin, *Traces of Racial Exceptionalism: Racializing Israeli Settler Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); and Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Abigail B. Bakan, *Israel, Palestine and the Politics of Race* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019). See also David Theo Goldberg, "Racial Palestinianization," in *Thinking Palestine*, ed. Ronit Lentin (New York: Zed, 2008), 25–45.

15. Eric Cortellessa, "'Hotline' Film is Hands-Off Yet Intense Look at Rights Group," *Times of Israel*, July 27, 2015, https://www.timesofisrael.com/hotline-film-is-hands-off-yet-intense-look-at-rights-group < https://www.timesofisrael.com/hotline-film-is-hands-off-yet-intense-look-at-rights-group> .

16. Jonathan Romney, review of *Hotline*, *Screen Daily*, February 9, 2015, https://www.screendaily.com/hotline/5083023.article < https://www.screendaily.com/hotline/5083023.article> .

17. For an earlier critique of documentary cinema's truth claims, see Brian Winston, "The Documentary Film as Scientific Inscription," in *Theorizing Documentary*, ed. Michael Renov (New York: Routledge, 1993), 37–57.

18. For a discussion of the African asylum-seekers that takes into account the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi divide, see Nir Cohen and Talia Margalit, "'There Are Really Two Cities Here': Fragmented Urban Citizenship in Tel Aviv," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 4 (2015): 666–86.

19. The racial blindspots of white feminism have been widely acknowledged. See, for instance, Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993). For critiques of Israeli feminism along these same lines, see Nahla Abdo, *Women in Israel: Gender, Race, and Citizenship* (London: Zed, 2011); and Smadar Lavie, "Mizrahi Feminism and the Question of Palestine," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 7, no. 2 (2011): 56–88.

20. *Between Fences* can be compared to similar movies from the region that involve performances by other oppressed communities: the Palestinian torture victims in Raed Andoni's *Ghost Hunting* (2017), for instance, or the Lebanese prisoners and *kafala* workers in Zeina Daccache's *12 Angry Lebanese* (2009), *Scheherazade's Diary* (2013), and *Shebaik Lebaik* (2016). The African actors eventually took their show on the road, and they gave a number of performances elsewhere in Israel. See Sonja Arsham Kuftinec, "Holot Legislative Theatre: Performing Refugees in Israel," *TDR/The Drama Review* 63, no. 2 (2019): 166–72; and Ofer Perelman, "How a Sudanese Asylum Seeker Caught the Acting Bug in Holot," *Ha'aretz*, March 17, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-how-a-sudanese-asylum-seeker-caught-the-acting-bug-in-holot-1.5911079 < https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-how-a-sudanese-asylum-seeker-caught-the-acting-bug-in-holot-1.5911079> .

21. Although not discussed in detail here, the documentary *Ethnocracy in the Promised Land* also deserves credit for taking an explicitly critical position vis-à-vis Zionism.

22. Palestinian filmmaker Annemarie Jacir similarly criticizes this tendency on the part of some filmmakers to humanize Arabs. As she argues, "To make work that will essentially 'humanize' or 'explain' Arabs is so limiting and, in fact, insulting, and I think it kills the potential of what I consider art. People who still don't get that Arabs are layered, complex 'humans' are simply not the audience I am interested in." Annemarie Jacir, et. al., "'I Wanted That Story to be Told' (Interview)," *Alif* 31 (2011): 246.

23. In his writings, Jacques Rancière seeks to fundamentally redefine our notion of equality. For him, equality is not a policy decision or a piece of legislation, but a supposition to be made from the outset. This view has very important political implications. For Rancière, it is not that there would be no equality without a preceding struggle; rather, there would be no collective struggle against inequality without a preceding supposition of equality. That is, inequality is properly opposed only because equality is first presupposed. Rancière's argument thus directs our attention towards the real, everyday existence of equality in the present, and his work can therefore be compared to the thinking of other scholars like bell hooks and Wendy Brown who similarly argue that emancipatory politics is subverted as long as it is based on wounds or brokenness. By treating the African asylum-seekers as equals from the outset, *Between Fences* performs this same act. The film does not seek to *prove* their equality; it just assumes it. See Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999). First published in French in 1995 by Éditions Galilée (Paris). See also bell hooks, "Lorde: The Imagination of Justice," in *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde*, ed. Rudolph P. Byrd, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: Oxford University, 2009), 248; and Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," *Political Theory* 21, no. 3 (1993): 390–410. ↩

24. Writing about Mograbi's earlier films, Shai Ginsburg similarly claims that "the filmmaker often serves as a primary figure of identification, as the audience is drawn to admire his (or her) courage, honesty and integrity. Mograbi works hard to undercut this tendency." Shai Ginsburg, "Studying Violence: The Films of Avi Mograbi," *Zeek*, October 24, 2009, https://zeek.forward.com/articles/115717 < https://zeek.forward.com/articles/115717> . ↩

25. As a Tel Aviv-born Israeli, Mograbi refers to himself as "white" in the film, but it is important to note that he is Mizrahi. As Mograbi explains in his previous documentary *Once I Entered a Garden* (2012), his family's origins are in Beirut and Damascus. ↩

26. Although Sand claims to reject all forms of ethnic or racial essentialism, he nevertheless seems to advance a very essentialist understanding of Jewishness when he fails to see how it can be articulated in non-Zionist terms. See his book, *How I Stopped Being a Jew*, trans. David Fernbach (New York: Verso, 2014). First published in Hebrew in 2014 by Kinneret Zmora-Bitan Dvir (Or Yehuda, Israel). ↩

27. Mograbi: "My films…interest me and people abroad. They don't interest the audience in Israel that much. I continue making films because I can't stand idly by…to give it up, for me, is to give up on life." Quoted in Dror Dayan, "The Manifestations of Political Power Structures in Documentary Film," (PhD diss., Bournemouth University, 2018), 111. ↩

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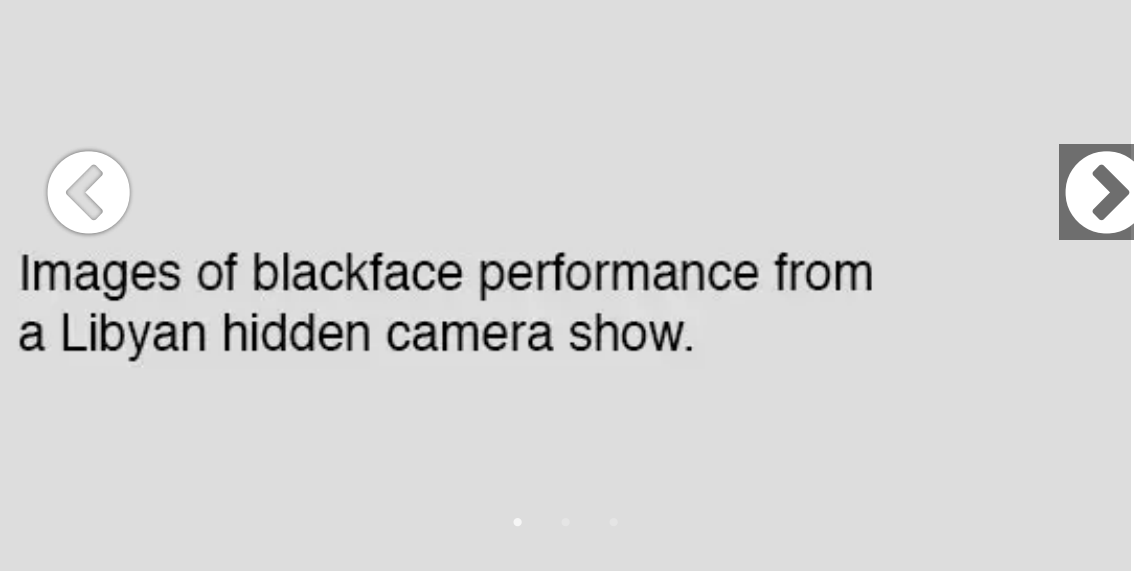
What is Whiteness in North Africa?

by Leila Tayeb | Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism in the Middle East and North Africa / Southwest Asia and North Africa (MENA/SWANA), Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT This entry sketches a matrix for conceptualizing race in/ and North Africa that takes Arabness, indigeneity, Islam, the Sahara, and slavery as orienting keywords. It suggests an approach to a geopolitically-grounded whiteness as social currency and aspiration that is both based in specific regional economic history and also reaches outward toward globally-circulating formations of racial hierarchy. Acknowledging the distinct legal, colonial, and state histories under and through which racialization has proceeded in North and Saharan Africa since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, this entry aims to draw out the ethical imaginaries through which bodies have been marked and categorized in this region. These ethical imaginaries have operated through their attendant languages, memories, and performances to enable racisms and colorisms with violent and enduring material consequences. Under the headings "Racialized Enslavement," "Whiteness and Arabness," "Race and the Sahara," and "Race in North African Popular Culture," I offer brief introductions to these discursive formations, histories, and conceptual intersections and offer suggested readings for each.

KEYWORDS anti-Blackness, Arabness, Blackness, indigeneity, Islam, North Africa, slavery, whiteness

On the second day of Ramadan, in early May of 2019, the Doha-based television channel Libya al-Ahrar aired an episode of its hidden camera program in which the show's star prankster blackens her face, adopts mocking versions of a "Sudanese" accent and attire, and then traps strangers in an elevator with two monkeys that she insistently describes as her children.[1] Only a few days later, the show repeated the blackface gag. This time the actor asks the waiter in a Lebanese restaurant in Libya to read the menu line by line with her as she responded with outrageous incomprehension, confusing things like "juice box" to exclaim, "You have dog juice?!" The elevator episode circulated on social media platforms with some condemnation but remains available on YouTube; the restaurant episode seemingly aired without hesitation. The ostensible comedy in these depictions relies on anti-Black racism and, in so doing, functions to ratify discourses of white supremacy. Like blackface performance practices elsewhere, these depictions reveal much more about those creating and consuming the racist portrayals than about those supposedly being portrayed. In these Libyan hidden camera clips and elsewhere in North African popular culture, who are the "white" Arabic-speakers that these racist depictions aim to elevate? What is whiteness in this context?[2]



In this short piece, I offer a reading list for thinking about whiteness in North Africa. By gathering the current literature, I posit Islam, slavery, indigeneity, Arabness, and the Sahara as orienting keywords in order to sketch a matrix for conceptualizing race in/and North Africa. I suggest that we must attend to a geopolitically-grounded whiteness operating in northern Africa as social currency and aspiration. By this I mean a notion of whiteness that is both based in specific regional economic and social history and also reaches outward toward globally circulating formations of racial hierarchy. Acknowledging the distinct legal, colonial, state histories under and through which racialization has proceeded in North and Saharan Africa since the decline and dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, this entry draws out the ethical imaginaries through which bodies have been marked and categorized in this region.[3] These ethical imaginaries operate through their attendant languages, memories, and performances to enable racisms and colorism with violent and enduring material consequences.

Through and alongside this matrix of keywords, I make two claims. The first is that there is analytical purchase to thinking whiteness in and through North Africa, even while this formation of whiteness only partially overlaps with the more dominant formations of whiteness attendant to and produced by European colonialism. The second is that through a range of discourses and performances in both scholarship and popular culture, Blackness is repeatedly constructed as if it were non-indigenous to North Africa. Ironically, this latter discursive practice is among a number of those which, as Jemima Pierre has argued, "actually work to *impede* race analysis about the African continent (beyond southern Africa), entrapping us into a kind of race-blindness."[4] The North versus Sub-Saharan Africa divide, Pierre continues, "has shaped Africanist scholarship to the point that this distinction is often assumed rather than interrogated."[5] This naturalized division is racialized: colonial scholars painted light-skinned people of the southern Mediterranean as "closer" to Europe both geographically and in terms of civilization. By continuing to describe North Africa as inevitably distinct from "Black Africa," we not only reinscribe this violent hierarchy, but we also prevent ourselves from seeing racialization as processual and dynamic. In so doing, we miss the opportunity to understand North and Saharan African spaces as sites for the ongoing production of race and white supremacy.

To offer a starting place—in a 1967 article, historian Leon Carl Brown described North Africa as "the great border zone where white ends meeting the area where black begins,"

where, he contended, "native whites and native blacks have confronted each other since the beginning of history."[6] Brown's essay goes on to incorporate a number of the key terms that I propose here, and compellingly illuminates a period of early postcolonial African hope and its emerging challenges by describing the ambivalent Pan-Africanism of Gamal Abdel Nasser and others in the 1950s and 1960s. But this formulation of a "great border zone" aptly illustrates the racialization of naturalized geography which has long characterized colonial (and some earlier) descriptions of northern Africa. When we take for granted the idea that the Sahara constitutes a natural border, we reify a logic that posits racial whiteness as indigenous to North Africa, racial Arabness as contributing to the maintenance of that whiteness, and racial blackness as non-indigenous. Amazigh ("Berber") indigeneity is here simultaneously configured as racially white and erased insofar as indigenous modes of thinking difference are domesticated.

Here, and in my research on contemporary Libya, I am invested in understanding whiteness not as a static ontology but as "a problematic, or an analytical *perspective*: that is, a way of formulating questions about social relations."[7] Thinking in terms of both conceptual and embodied movement, I am especially interested in "the ways that whiteness seduces and rewards, becoming the subject of fantasy and desire,"[8] and I agree with Steve Garner that "the best way to understand whiteness is to think both relationally and comparatively."[9] In Garner's work and in more recent scholarship, this has primarily meant taking the critical study of whiteness beyond its "home" of the United States and into Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. What happens when we take this study from settler colonial contexts into the postcolony? To turn again to Pierre, "how could any postcolonial society not be structured by its legacy of race and racialization—especially when colonialism was, in the most ideological, political, and practical way, racialized rule? How do we, in fact, analyze the persistence of white (and racialized Arab) privilege in postcolonial spaces?"[10]

Whiteness is both productive and the product of affective force, and while it moves, it moves us. As Sara Ahmed has argued, "Whiteness could be described as an ongoing and un-finished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space."[11] My argument here is not that (some) North Africans *are* in any stable sense white or have access to the top rungs of global hierarchies of white supremacy. Rather, I am interested in the array of things that formations of whiteness *do* and *enable* in the contexts of northern Africa.[12] Whiteness shapes both how bodies can take up space and what spaces are available to whom. As Ahmed writes,

> If the world is made white, then the body-at-home is one that can inhabit whiteness. As Fanon's work shows, after all, bodies are shaped by histories of colonialism, which makes the world 'white', a world that is inherited, or which is already given before the point of an individual's arrival. This is the familiar world, the world of whiteness, as a world we know implicitly. Colonialism makes the world 'white', which is of course a world 'ready' for certain kinds of bodies, as a world that puts certain objects within their reach.[13]

Ahmed is not describing North Africa here (even while a trace of North Africa haunts this passage with Fanon). But the "bodies-at-home" in North Africa are most often those that can inhabit whiteness. As I suggest above, both Western scholarship and local discursive practices make North African spaces white. In this way, whiteness in North Africa takes valences of "Europeanness," as a colonial remnant, while it also operates in another register, as "our own" whiteness, a color-coded language of virtue and status. This

includes but is not reducible to white-as-Western because a local articulation of whiteness can be valorized at the same time that Westernness is rejected. This local articulation of whiteness is bound up in histories that stretch back at least as far the seventh-century Arab invasion of North Africa.

This entry proceeds by pairing and working through the orienting keywords of Arabness, indigeneity, Islam, the Sahara, and slavery to outline the frameworks and problematics these themes suggest for thinking whiteness in North Africa. Under the headings "Racialized Enslavement," "Whiteness and Arabness," "Race and the Sahara," and "Race in North African Popular Culture," I offer brief introductions to these discursive formations, histories, and conceptual intersections and offer suggested readings for each. Some of the relevant literatures have not, to my knowledge, substantively engaged each other, yet reading across these separate conversations will be necessary as we build tools for understanding race in northern Africa.

Racialized Enslavement

Blackness is produced as non-indigenous to North Africa through a racial imaginary that relies on the histories of racialized enslavement that have characterized the region. To offer an incomplete list, the slave trade was officially outlawed in Tunisia in 1841,[14] in Algeria in 1848,[15] in Libya in 1856,[16] in Egypt in 1887,[17] in Morocco in 1923,[18] and in Mauritania in 1980.[19] In each of these contexts abolition involved a complex interplay of colonial politics with regional and local discourses and economic forces; in most cases the practice continued for decades after its legal prohibition. The slave trades that moved across the Sahara, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea involved captives of a range of geographic and ethnic backgrounds, and, as a number of historians have shown, frequently were justified through moral-legal formations that marked non-Muslims as enslavable.[20] Yet, historians have also illustrated how enslavement came to be specifically articulated to a conception of blackness in these regions, producing a racialized distinction. John Hunwick, for example, argued that from the sixteenth century onward in the "Mediterranean Islamic world," blackness became associated with slavery by virtue of the proportion of enslaved black people.[21] Similarly, and pushing back against a generation of scholarship which described "Islamic slavery" as a relatively "benign" institution, Chouki El Hamel more recently argued "that relying solely on Islamic ideology as a crucial key to explain social relations, particularly in the history of black slavery in the Muslim world, yields an inaccurate historical record of the people, institutions, and social practices of slavery in the Arab world."[22] In the context of North Africa, broadly, the production of a category of blackness linked to enslavement and arrival also enabled the production of a formation of whiteness linked to Arabness, superiority, and normative belonging.

Suggested reading (in order of publication date):

- John Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, eds., *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002).
- Terence Walz and Kenneth Cuno, eds., *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010).
- Eve Troutt Powell, *Tell This in My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

- Ismael Montana, *The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013).
- Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
- Timothy Cleaveland, "Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti and his Islamic Critique of Racial Slavery in the Maghrib," *Journal of North African Studies* 20, no. 1 (2015): 42–64.
- Amal Altaleb, "The Social and Economic History of Slavery in Libya (1800-1950)" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2015).
- Mahmood Mamdani et al., "Trans-African Slaveries," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 38, no. 2 (August 2018): 185–329.
- Erin Pettigrew, "Histories of Race, Slavery, and Emancipation in the Middle East," *Mediterranean Politics* 25, no. 4 (2020): 528–536.

Whiteness and Arabness

The legal and social histories of Arab attempts to varyingly claim and disavow whiteness in the United States have received substantive scholarly attention. These studies have illustrated how nineteenth- and early twentieth-century legal claims to whiteness by Arab immigrants were structured by the particular racial and legal regimes of their time. Primarily Christian immigrants who had come from greater Syria litigated claims to their whiteness as the route to naturalization in a period of Asian exclusion. This history is particular and contingent; that is to say, it might, in different circumstances, have been otherwise.[23] Even while describing a US context, such studies are relevant for conceptualizing whiteness in North Africa insofar as they enable us to observe some key aspects of the overlapping problematics at play between these two geopolitical sites, as well as the limitations of this overlap. Histories of Arab racialization in the US inflect globally circulating racial discourses. Further, even in a more contemporary US political context, one in which many Arab Americans do not actively seek access to whiteness, we find some popular and even scholarly articulations of Arabness that specifically occlude blackness. One finds this occlusion in, for example, discussions of shifting Arab American inclusion in whiteness, which leave out Black Arab Americans for whom whiteness has never been accessible.

Historians have also traced notions of Arabness as whiteness in other geopolitical and historical contexts. Ibn Battuta, for example, wrote in the mid-fourteenth century of "whites" as he traveled through the West African Sahel and southern Sahara; for him these included Arabs and Arabophone North Africans, but not Berbers, whose "distance and foreignness from the normative cultural practices of the Arab Muslim World" precluded whiteness.[24] El Hamel demonstrates that this formulation of "white" Arabness may have included people of a variety of family lineages, so long as they could claim "one drop" of (paternal) "Arab blood."[25] Pre-colonial Arab and Arabophone social formations did not necessarily value whiteness in terms of color and in terms of Europeanness in the same way that these come to be valued through empire, but Arabophone anti-blackness is evident long before the European colonial period.[26] In postcolonial North Africa, these intertwined legacies have enabled outcomes like that described by Afifa Ltifi in Bourguiba's Tunisia, where colorblind family name policies constructed a normative whiteness and "reproduced the patron client relationships that bound slave and master's descendants."[27] Across contexts, "Arab" proximity to and approximation of whiteness has historically been predicated on anti-blackness.[28]

Suggested reading:

- Helen Hatab Samhan, "Not Quite White: Race Classification and the Arab-American Experience," in *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. Michael Suleiman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 209–226.
- Bruce Hall, "The Question of 'Race' in the Pre-Colonial Southern Sahara," *Journal of North African Studies* 10, no. 3–4 (2005): 339–367.
- Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber, eds., *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008).
- Sarah Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
- Amina Zarrugh, "Racialized Political Shock: Arab American Racial Formation and the Impact of Political Events," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39, no. 15 (2016): 2722–2739.
- Loubna Qutami, "Censusless: Arab/Muslim Interpolation into Whiteness and the War on Terror," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 23, no. 2 (June 2020): 161–200.
- Afifa Ltifi, "Black Tunisians and the Pitfalls of Bourguiba's Homogenization Project," *POMEPS Studies* 40 (June 2020): 69–72.

Race and the Sahara (Arabs and Africans)

Colonial representations in scholarship and popular media which utilize an oppositional framework for understanding "North Africa" as distinct from "Sub-Saharan Africa" suggest a racialized boundary of naturalized geography in the desert. A wave of scholarship in recent decades has attempted to alter this paradigm, describing the desert as a "bridge,"[29] and honing in on Saharan and "trans-Saharan" histories and lifeworlds.[30] Some of this work has illuminated the racialization that continues to adhere in the Arabophone states of the Mediterranean coast to the descendants of enslaved peoples captured in West Africa and other places. This racialization, as I describe above, posits blackness as a referentiality to enslavement which sticks to an array of bodies, including those of more recent migrants and indigenous Black North Africans. One result of this is the carving away of indigeneity from Black North Africans. By linking blackness to enslavement, this discourse in both scholarship and popular practice dispossesses Black North Africans of a natal claim to North Africa (and in some instances Arab identity) apart from a history of arrival.[31] If, as Sara Ahmed has argued, "whiteness becomes worldly through the noticeability of the arrival of some bodies more than others,"[32] then this is a distortion that contributes to the (re)production of whiteness in/as North Africa.[33]

One of the quotidian ways these racial geopolitics are maintained is through the common third-person descriptor of Black people in northern Africa as "Africans" distinct from an unspecified (unmarked) norm. This discursive practice also produces a tension-filled and ambivalent whiteness, one with which Algerian diasporic activist Houria Bouteldja recently danced in a polemic on "whites, Jews, and us," when she wrote, "Fifty years after the independence movements, North Africa is the one subduing its own citizens and black Africans. I was going to say 'my African brothers.' But I no longer dare to, now that I have admitted my crime. Farewell Bandung."[34] In "no longer daring" to claim fraternal kinship, Bouteldja acknowledges the violence of North African anti-blackness. Yet, even then, in describing "North Africa" as "subduing its own citizens and black Africans," she also seems to suggest that the end of the colonially constructed state system could end North African anti-blackness. But the latter runs far deeper than the postcolonial state. North

African unmarked whiteness itself holds up the "and" in her phrase, "its own citizens and black Africans."

Suggested reading:

- Eve Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
- John Hunwick, "A Region of the Mind: Medieval Arab Views of African Geography and Ethnography and Their Legacy," *Sudanic Africa* 16 (2005): 103–136.
- Ghislaine Lydon, "Writing Trans-Saharan History: Methods, Sources, and Interpretations Across the African Divide," *Journal of North African Studies* 10, no. 3–4 (2005): 293–324.
- E. Ann McDougall, "Constructing Emptiness: Islam, Violence and Terror in the Historical Making of the Sahara," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 25, no. 1 (2007): 17–30.
- Ziad Bentahar, "Continental Drift: The Disjunction of North and Sub-Saharan Africa," *Research in African Literatures* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 1–13.
- Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Race in North African Popular Culture

If whiteness needs maintenance to persist and racializations of all sorts are continually unfolding, popular culture is a privileged site in which this work occurs, as is evident across this forum. In film, performance, visual art, and literature, representations mark bodies in and out of normative community, naturalize racialized language, entrench stereotypical figurations, and reify social hierarchies. Recent years have seen greater public controversies appear surrounding racist representations of Black characters in North African (and other Arab) popular culture.[35] Scholarship investigating race and popular culture in/and North Africa is relatively emerging, but has tackled a range of themes and questions surrounding nationalism, empire, alterity and aesthetics across performance forms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Continued work is needed. As of yet, scholars have more vigorously illustrated and theorized anti-black discourses, practices, and representations in popular culture than they have asked how these works produce and maintain whiteness. Complementary to this continuing work, I call for, and I hope to contribute to an inquiry into how numerous popular cultural forms have variously proposed, constructed, reified, subverted, and challenged North African iterations of normative whiteness.

Suggested reading:

- Eve Troutt Powell, "Burnt-Cork Nationalism: Race and Identity in the Theater of 'Ali al-Kassar," in *Colors of Enchantment: Theater, Dance, Music, and the Visual Arts of the Middle East*, ed. Sherifa Zuhur (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001), 13–26.
- Jessica Winegar and Katarzyna Pieprzak, eds, *Critical Interventions: Africanity and North Africa* (2009).
- Richard Jankowsky, *Stambeli: Music, Trance, and Alterity in Tunisia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
- Ismael Montana, "Bori Practice Among Enslaved West Africans of Ottoman Tunis: Unbelief (Kufr) or Another Dimension of the African Diaspora?" *History of the Family* 16, no. 2 (June 2011): 152–159.

- Ifdal Elsaket, "Jungle Films in Egypt: Race, Anti-Blackness, and Empire," *Arab Studies Journal* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 8–32.
- Sophia Azeb, "The Pharoah's New Clothes," *Chimurenga* (July 2019).
- Cynthia Becker, *Performing Blackness in Morocco: Gnawa Music and Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

Conclusion

Describing blackface performance in early twentieth-century Egypt, Eve Troutt Powell wrote of songs and plays in which "Nubian" ("*berberi*") and "Sudanese" characters enacted Egyptian anticolonial, nationalist desires. As she explained, "In the absence of the 'right' kind of Sudanese political allies—that is, those who would proclaim a desire for the unity of the Nile Valley—the Egyptian artists and writers deeply involved in the promulgation of the nationalist message *made up their own Sudanese*."[36] The Libyan hidden camera skits with which I opened this writing, and which drew directly from this long history of Egyptian caricatures of Sudanese people, illustrate the continued need to interrogate the racial work that blackface and other performance practices do in North African contexts. Through violently erasing the Others they purport to represent, both a century ago and in the recent past these practices have served to construct their performers' and audiences' visions of themselves. They utilize anti-black tropes to produce whiteness in their performers, audiences, and cultural milieus. In this way, they join myriad other discursive and performative practices that repeatedly construct blackness as not indigenous to North Africa. It is imperative that we do not stop at noting the anti-black racism that we rightly see in these, but rather go on additionally to theorize the racial and spatial whiteness that these practices enable and uphold.

Notes

1. On this incident and for a link to the clip on YouTube, see Declan Walsh, "Blackface, Staple of Arab Comedy, Faces Surge of Criticism," *New York Times*, August 18, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/18/world/middleeast/blackface-arab-tv-racist.html <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/18/world/middleeast/blackface-arab-tv-racist.html>. ↩

2. While much of what I write here is relevant to other parts of the MENA/SWANA region, including the Levant and the Gulf, I focus here on North Africa in order to address the particularities of trans-Saharan slavery and questions of indigeneity in Africa. ↩

3. One major difference in colonial regimes of racialization between North Africa and the Levant has to do with how and when control transferred from Ottoman to European power. Territories in the Levant transferred after World War I were classified in "civilizational capacity" through the League of Nations Mandate system, which ranked Arab former provinces of the Ottoman Empire (racially) above former German colonies in Africa and the Pacific. The Ottoman periphery in North Africa moved to European control earlier—Italy invaded Libya in 1911; France established its protectorate in Tunisia in 1881, having occupied Algeria from 1830—and was subject to racial policies that stemmed from the colonial discourses of those competing powers. In Libya, for example, the Italian colonial "fourth shore" argument narrated North African ("Mediterranean") racial proximity in contrast to its holdings in East Africa, and in a way that dovetailed with preexisting notions of "Sudanese" black people found in Libya as inherently originating elsewhere. On the racializing power of the Mandate system, see Sherene Saikaly, "The Matter of Time," *The American Historical Review* 124, no. 5 (December 2019): 1681–1688. On the spatial politics of Italian colonial racial schema, see Mia Fuller, "Preservation and Self-Absorption: Italian Colonisation and the Walled City of Tripoli, Libya," *Journal of North African Studies* 5, no. 4: 121–154. ↩

4. Jemima Pierre, "Race in Africa Today: A Commentary," *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 3 (2013): 548.
5. Pierre, "Race in Africa Today," 549.
6. Leon Carl Brown, "Color in Northern Africa," *Daedalus* 96, no. 2 (1967): 464.
7. Steve Garner, *Whiteness: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 3.
8. Veronica Watson, Deirdre Howard-Wagner, and Lisa Spanierman, introduction to *Unveiling Whiteness in the Twenty-First Century: Global Manifestations, Transdisciplinary Interventions*, ed. Veronica Watson et al. (London: Lexington Books, 2015), xii.
9. Garner, *Whiteness*, 1.
10. Pierre, "Race in Africa Today," 549.
11. Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (2007): 150.
12. In part, this kind of inquiry aligns with Raka Shome's comparative work on whiteness in the US and in India, where she is especially concerned with the operations of "disembodied whiteness." She explains, "Whiteness . . . is not merely a discourse that is contained in societies inhabited by white people; it is not a phenomenon that is enacted only where white bodies exist. Whiteness is not just about bodies and color, but rather more about the *discursive practices* that, because of colonialism and neocolonialism, privilege and sustain the global dominance of white imperial subjects and Eurocentric worldviews." See Raka Shome, "Whiteness and the Politics of Location: Postcolonial Reflections," in *Whiteness: The Communication of Social Identity*, ed. Thomas K. Nakayama and Judith N. Martin (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1999), 108–111.
13. Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," 153–54.
14. Ismael Montana, *The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013).
15. Benjamin Claude Brower, "Rethinking Abolition in Algeria: Slavery and the 'Indigenous Question,'" *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 49, no. 3 (2009): 805; Soha El Achi, "Children and Slave Emancipation in French Algeria and Tunisia (1846–1892)" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2017).
16. Amal Altaleb, "The Social and Economic History of Slavery in Libya (1800–1950)" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2015).
17. Eve Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 66.
18. Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 264.
19. E. Ann McDougal, "Living the Legacy of Slavery: Between Discourse and Reality," Cahiers d'Études Africaines 45, no. 179/180 (2005): 963.
20. Ghislaine Lyon, "Slavery, Exchange and Islamic Law: A Glimpse from the Archives of Mali and Mauritania," *African Economic History* 33 (2005): 121–122; Bruce Hall, "The Question of 'Race' in the Pre-Colonial Southern Sahara," *Journal of North African Studies* 10, no. 3–4 (2005): 351–352.
21. John O. Hunwick, "Islamic Law and Polemics Over Slavery in North and West Africa, 16th–19th Century," in *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*, ed. Shaun Marmon (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1999), 43–68.
22. Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 9.
23. I find it particularly compelling, for example, to imagine that if the Arabic-speaking immigrants in the US in this period litigating their racial status in order to gain citizenship had been from what is now Algeria or Morocco, they may have claimed African descent, which would have produced a different legal legacy.

24. Bruce Hall, "The Question of 'Race' in the Pre-Colonial Southern Sahara," *Journal of North African Studies* 10, no. 3–4 (2005): 340.

25. El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, 94–97 and 301.

26. See for example John O. Hunwick, "A Region of the Mind: Medieval Arab Views of African Geography and Ethnography and Their Legacy," *Sudanic Africa* 16 (2005): 103–136.

27. Afifa Ltifi, "Black Tunisians and the Pitfalls of Bourguiba's Homogenization Project," *POMEPS Studies* 40 (June 2020): 69–72.

28. I want to underscore the tenuousness and complexity of conceptions of Arabness in North Africa, which ultimately goes beyond the scope of this entry. For a brief and illuminating discussion of this term outside of its well-trodden geographies, see Mandana Limbert, "Caste, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Arabness in Southern Arabia," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34, no. 3 (2014): 590–598.

29. Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, ed., *Bridges Across the Sahara: Social, Economic and Cultural Impact of the Trans-Saharan Trade During the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).

30. Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Ghislaine Lydon, "Writing Trans-Saharan History: Methods, Sources and Interpretations Across the African Divide," *Journal of North African Studies* 10, no. 3–4 (2005): 293–324; Tara Deubel, Scott Youngstedt, and Helen Tissieres, eds., *Saharan Crossroads: Exploring Historical, Cultural, and Artistic Linkages Between North and West Africa* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014). See also the Saharan Crossroads program that the American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS) funds alongside the West African Research Association (WARA) and the Saharan Studies Association (SSA), http://aimsnorthafrica.org/saharan-crossroads < http://aimsnorthafrica.org/saharan-crossroads> .

31. In thinking through the racialization of "natal claims" to particular geocultural formations, I am borrowing here from Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, who has explicated the processes through which "in U.S. American Muslim discourse, Blackness often can make no natal claim to an 'Islamic East.'" See Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), 80.

32. Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," 150.

33. It remains to be seen whether Amazigh nationalist narratives that highlight continuities of language and culture between indigenous communities throughout northern and Saharan Africa can disrupt normative North African practices of whiteness. I'm thinking of Instagram accounts, for example, that are intentional about portraying a spectrum of different bodies, skin colors, hair, and locale in order to narrate an Amazigh / Kel Tamasheq indigeneity (see, for example, https://instagram.com/Amazigh_nation < https://instagram.com/Amazigh_nation>). I wonder to what extent these representational practices are disruptive, or if they are rather more akin to the diversity discourses of liberal white humanism in other contexts.

34. Houria Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us: Toward a Politics of Revolutionary Love* (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), (2016), 29.

35. Mariam Nabbout, "Thanks for the Ramadan Comedies, But Enough with the 'Blackface,'" Stepfeed, May 14, 2019, https://stepfeed.com/thanks-for-the-ramadan-comedies-but-enough-with-the-blackface-0576 < https://stepfeed.com/thanks-for-the-ramadan-comedies-but-enough-with-the-blackface-0576> ; Hana Al-Khamri, "The Outrageous Racism that 'Graced' Arab TV Screens in Ramadan," *Aljazeera*, July 1, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/outrageous-racism-graced-arab-tv-ramadan-180616134620046.html < https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/outrageous-racism-graced-arab-tv-ramadan-180616134620046.html> ; Harakat Tanweer, Press Release, May 8, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/Libyatanweer/photos/a.346642885450494/2215721838542580/?type=3&theater <

https://www.facebook.com/Libyatanweer/photos/a.346642885450494/2215721838542580/?type=3&theater> .

36. Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, 186, emphasis added.

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Introduction: Cripistemologies of Crisis: Emergent Knowledges for the Present

by Theodora Danylevich and Alyson Patsavas | Cripistemologies of Crisis: Emergent Knowledges for the Present, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT The increasing recognition of critical disability studies as a generative body of work across disciplines is inseparable from a collective need to make sense of ongoing moments of socio-political crisis, emergency, and exceptionality. Theorizations of crip time emergent from lived experiences of disability are critical to the ongoing work of understanding and surviving a chronically debilitating socio-political context. Our current political moment seems to protract states of crisis to such a degree that the very notions of emergency and crisis shift under the weight of their simultaneous seeming banality and urgent ubiquity. "Cripistemologies of Crisis: Emergent Knowledges for the Present" contends that epistemologies of chronicity, illness, and trauma offer indispensable lenses through which to rethink—and care for—our collective present. The essays within "Cripistemologies of Crisis" reframe our understandings of both social and personal crisis, and explore how crisis and emergency shape the experiences and knowledges of our bodyminds in time and space. The authors collectively offer an epistemological toolkit to theorize and survive everyday states of trauma, madness, and illness as the lived impacts of such quotidian and ongoing violence. "Cripistemologies of Crisis" asks, then, what crip futures can be conjured through a centering of experiential, collective, and speculative ways of knowing with/in/through crisis.

KEYWORDS cripistemology, crisis, critical disability studies, emergency, trauma

Leading up to the 2019 fire season, three large California power companies initiated a process called "de-energization," or power shutoffs, in the name of public safety. As one *New York Times* article reports, "Never before in California history had a utility deliberately cut power to as many as three million people, which PG&E [Pacific Gas and Electric] did Oct. 26 [2019] in an attempt to prevent wildfires."[1] This drastic approach did not actually prevent the company's equipment from starting several fires.[2] Critics of the move, including climate scientist and founder of the Pacific Institute Peter Gleick, further cited the disruptive impact on city infrastructure, and called PG&E out for "shifting risk from its own corporate entity to the public."[3] Those most "at risk" became those residents who rely on power for daily life-sustaining needs—from ventilators that run on electricity to medication that needs refrigeration to air purifiers that make polluted air more breathable. The response from disability justice activists was swift in its condemnation, pointing to the disproportionate risk that the shutoffs posed for older, poor, and disabled people—particularly disabled people of color. Amid such public outcry, PG&E continued to claim that these power shutoffs were "necessary," "the right thing to do," and "critical to the safety of its customers,"[4] telling "California energy regulators that the state [would] likely see blackouts for another 10 years."[5]

For those to whom the loss of power presents imminent precarity, heightened vulnerability, and increased proximity to death, these ongoing blackout strategies essentially fabricate

an ongoing state of life-threatening crisis. This crisis is brought on not only, or even primarily, by climate change and corporate negligence. Rather, it is facilitated by a biopolitical calculus that, as disabled writer and activist s.e. smith notes, "pits competing public health interests against each other," sacrificing one in order to "manage" the other.[6] In initiating and continuing de-energization procedures, PG&E weighed the imminent crisis posed by the wildfires against the life-threatening crisis that de-energization created for some. Their actions indicate that the company considered the impact on "vulnerable populations" as less pressing than the potential impact of the wildfires.[7]

PG&E's actions are emblematic of a fundamental way in which corporate capitalist interests are shored up by assumptions about the expendability of disabled and disability-adjacent populations. This anecdote operates according to a racial capitalist matrix, reliant on what we recognize as *eugenic logics* and *crisis logics*, which, viewed together, crystallize into a *necropolitics of disability*.[8] An intensifying pattern of such rationalized (re)allocations of life-imperiling conditions onto variously disabled populations compels us, in this special issue, to attend to what we call crip knowledges of crisis—why we need them and what is at stake if we disregard them. The decision of PG&E to manage a crisis of fire risks by cutting off power regardless of the life-threatening impact on disabled, ill, and older adults who depend on it realizes a paradigmatically eugenic framing of disability and aging as individualized and medicalized, already bearing the mark of death. Through this frame, disabled and older adults are understood as *inherently* (i.e., biologically) at risk in ways that position caring for their increased vulnerability as "wasteful" or "unnecessary," particularly in moments of exceptionalism and crisis management. By eugenic logics, the vulnerability that resides in the bodyminds of certain individuals is *imagined* to represent a culpability or threat—or even outright criminality—against the public good.[9] In the above example, such an individualized and moralized vulnerability stands in distinct opposition to the more recognized and sanctioned collective vulnerability to an imminent crisis of wildfires, and the vulnerability for which PG&E has clearer liability, as the company responsible for the failing infrastructure that caused many of the fires. The imagined inherent vulnerability-cum-culpability of disabled and older adults, in turn, allows PG&E to abdicate responsibility for the life-threatening results of their crisis logic driven actions.

While PG&E offers a "Medical Baseline Program" meant to provide electricity at lower rates as well as extra notifications in advance of shutoffs to "customers who have special energy needs due to qualifying medical conditions," such alerts were reported to be uneven, at best.[10] Notably, this program places PG&E in the position of adjudicating "qualifying" medical conditions and ties this process to "benefits" of lower rates. In doing so, the program relies on a contentious scientific administrative system mobilized to certify the truths of the body, which Ellen Samuels has termed *biocertification*.[11] Biocertifications such as doctors' evaluations, diagnoses, and verifications, Samuels cautions, contribute to the bureaucratic abandonment of a whole set of people living with non-biocertified —"undocumented"—disabilities or impairments in ways that intersect with race, gender, citizenship status, and class to heighten the impact on those most marginalized.[12] Moreover, biocertifications respond to a very different type of (identity) crisis caused by the instability of the category of disability itself. Like countless other disability-related programs, the reduced-rate aspect of PG&E's Medical Baseline Program ties the qualification process to a system incentivized to keep the number of those who qualify low. To be clear, highlighting and critiquing the ranked valuation process that PG&E engages in does not dismiss the very real and devastating impact of the fires themselves. However, unlike peer companies that opted for more targeted power-shut offs, PG&E's sweeping de-energization, its reported lack of implementation of the promised advance notice of

power-shut offs, and its reliance on systems of biocertification reveals a distinct reliance upon a necropolitics of disability that concretizes risk in order to justify its role in the debilitation and imperilment of whole groups of people under the auspices of "crisis" management.

Versions of this ethical "trolley dilemma" have become even more pervasive in our cultural consciousness in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic: in situations where risk or death *seem* inevitable, crisis calculations direct decisions about whose risk and/or life matters more. This risk-evaluation practice, which manifests in the biopolitical devaluation of disabled lives, reflects a eugenic ideology, itself a long-standing conversation in critical disability studies that has only become more pressing within the context of COVID. For instance, Esther Ignagni, Eliza Chandler, and Loree Erickson describe how triage practices and the devastation of the virus within congregate care settings are merely an "amplification of this frame of disposability along interlocking markers of marginalization."[13] Importantly, they urge against the impulse to respond to this logic by outright rejecting the vulnerability assigned to disabled, chronically ill, and older adults. Refusing the realities of our vulnerabilities actually facilitates eugenic practices by, at best, leaving us "fatigued and overstretched, increasing our vulnerability" and, at worst, creating an "imperative to give up one's right to healthcare."[14] Rather, crip interventions into this eugenic logic need to simultaneously map out the structural conditions of produced vulnerability and the harm that risk-logics enact, while also centering the claims of survival with and through such vulnerabilities. Several overlapping elements have enabled PG&E's actions as well as the disproportionate devastation of COVID-19 on disabled people, communities of color, and frontline workers: the mobilization of risk assessment, the necropolitical marking of vulnerability as inherent in some, *and* the denial of prioritized care for those marked as vulnerable.

There are, of course, no shortages of global existential crises and equally global, urgent, and existentially threatening crisis *logics*. There is also far more to say about crisis-related power shut-offs: the parsing out of risks and responsibilities in the face of environmental degradation, the abandonment of those most impacted, and the privatization of responsibility that the PG&E case reflects. As well, there is more to explore about the ways in which the COVID-19 public health crisis replicates some of these patterns. The PG&E example is, in this sense, both exemplary and banal, serving as a strikingly prescient example of the consequences of crisis logics on disabled, chronically ill, poor folks, and communities of color.

The concept for cripistemologies of crisis emerged from a conference call that we formulated (with essay contributor Angela Carter) for the Critical Disability Studies Caucus sponsored panel of the 2018 American Studies Association Conference. The call sought crip epistemologies responding to the escalating crisis rhetoric that circulated in the early years of the Trump presidency. As this collection has taken shape in the intervening years, the need for crip crisis knowledge has only further crystalized. To meet this demand, the essays included here reflect upon the endemic, ongoing, and cyclical presence of crises while simultaneously asking how to cultivate knowledge for living with and through said forms of crisis.

This special section illustrates the violence done through the positioning of crisis as a singular and exceptional event that can mobilize seemingly exceptional forms of violence and neglect. The dangerous rhetoric of "unprecedented times" conveniently erases and overlooks those times and those lives that exist as an ongoing precedent to

recognized/sanctioned crises. While crisis may be an affectively loaded designation of an exceptional temporality, it hinges upon a misrecognition of a crisis-event as a singular, troubling punctuation in a fantasy of an otherwise orderly and undisturbed warp and weft of daily life. Such fantastical and distinct temporalities of crisis and normalcy are emblematic of, and indeed foundational to, the control and violence inherent in the logic that organizes racial capitalism. Further, this fantasy of a singular punctuated crisis permits and perpetuates victim-blaming orientations, gaslighting, abandonment, and the realization of eugenic logics. Reckoning with the everyday nature of this violence is all the more urgent amidst imaginings of a "post-COVID" world that too easily draw sharp lines around a "pre" and "post" pandemic world in ways that fail to account for the systemic violence that operated before, during, and after COVID-19 in other, perhaps less spectacularized, forms. The essays in this special section, thus, refute and deconstruct the harmful implications of conceptualizing crisis within neat "post" and "pre" temporalities to ask not only what harm such temporalities cause but also to recognize the value of the accumulated knowledge of those surviving within such endemic states.

As we elaborate more fully in a dedicated section on the essays below, our special section contributors consider the critical insights that theorizing experiences of disability, instability, and trauma offer to collective efforts to complicate understandings of the pace and politics of "crisis." They present the crucial role that relationality and community play in intervening in the crisis logics outlined above. In "When Silence Said Everything: Reconceptualizing Trauma through Critical Disability Studies," < https://csalateral.org/section/cripistemologies-of-crisis/when-silence-said-everything-reconceptualizing-trauma-through-critical-disability-studies-carter/> Angela Carter articulates a crip retheorization of trauma through a close reading of the relationality of trauma's spacetime enacted by X González in their speech at the 2018 March for Our Lives. Alyson K. Spurgas's "Solidarity in Falling Apart: Toward a Crip, Collectivist, and Justice-Seeking Theory of Feminine Fracture" < https://csalateral.org/section/cripistemologies-of-crisis/solidarity-falling-apart-toward-crip-collectivist-justice-theory-feminine-fracture-spurgas/> counters the largely accepted theories of dissociation through a centering of minoritized and migrant trans women's experiences to explore the endemic chronic and fractured *everydayness* of traumatized femme populations and experience. Finally, Jess Whatcott's "Crip Collectivity Beyond Neoliberalism in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*" < https://csalateral.org/section/cripistemologies-of-crisis/crip-collectivity-beyond-neoliberalism-octavia-butler-parable-of-the-sower-whatcott/> invites us into a speculatively-oriented cripistemology of crisis, with a practical guide as a takeaway. The essays offer textured conceptualizations of trauma and survival that fashion more radically just schematics for how we understand crisis in relation to race, gender, populations, and bodyminds that have been constituted by and through trauma and vulnerability. We contend that such reconceptualizations of cultural configurations of crisis both make available and take shape through modeling different possible and meaningful ways for us to *listen to* disabled, abandoned, traumatized, and dissociatively fractured (as Spurgas describes) voices. By drawing from the range of knowledge that these lives and histories have to offer, we can follow a different, if less stable and singular logic for navigating survival and creating community while in crisis. The cripistemologies of crisis generated by this special section build on critical disability studies theorizing and disability justice organizing in aspirational, generative, fractured, unstable, persistent, and coalitional ways. The essays step outside of established frameworks for meaning-making and press against the disciplinary boundaries of disability and cultural studies scholarship with an intention to recuperate more just possibilities for rethinking ourselves and our world with/in crisis.

Everyday Emergencies: Crip Temporality

Theorizations of "states of exception,"[15] "crisis ordinariness"[16] and "everyday emergenc[ies]"[17] outline the ways in which states of emergency often become protracted and systemic in ways that create chronic crises. These crises both result from and (re)enable forms of state violence and neglect, in the name of exigency and economic "preservation." Mobilizations of such exceptionalism realize a necropolitics of disability that marks racialized, disabled, older, and sick bodies/populations as expendable. Furthermore, theorizations of debility, abandonment, and neglect highlight the disproportionate impact that both states of emergency and forms of "slow violence" have on the lives of racialized, classed, and disabled people.[18] The increasing proliferation of disability scholarship is indispensable to making sense of ongoing moments of socio-political crisis, emergency, and exceptionality. Theorizations of crip time[19] and crip spacetime,[20] emergent from lived experiences of disability, are particularly vital to the ongoing work of understanding and surviving a chronically debilitating socio-political context. As Ellen Samuels notes in her elaboration of crip time, "Disability and illness have the power to extract us from linear, progressive time with its normative life stages and cast us into a wormhole of backward and forward acceleration, jerky stops and starts, tedious intervals and abrupt endings."[21] Samuels theorizes disability's unique structuring of time as dynamic, elliptical, and uneven. For her, crip time describes the multitude of ways that disability disrupts normative, progressive time to create new relationships to and forms of temporality that defy disability's easy conflation with "crisis" time.

These crip temporalities contrast starkly against the temporalities often *assigned to* disability, and offer crucial tools to think sociopolitical crisis and crisis logics anew. Feminist disability studies scholar Alison Kafer examines how "disability is seen as the sign of no future."[22] This lack of futurity works from and through the positioning of disability as something of a suspended present, a state of suspended tragedy with no promise or possibility. Further, while disability may also be seen as something that belongs in the past (as in: "shouldn't we have found a cure for that already?"), disability can also complicate views of pastness more generally. Disabled people are rarely viewed as having a past that matters beyond the imagined tragedy of their disablement.[23] Disabled people's pasts, with all of the knowledge, experience, and liveliness that they entail, are often denied a voice or value. We see this enacted in ways ranging from the systematic dismissal of experiential knowledge gathered from a lifetime of living with disabilities to the patronizing infantilization that underwrites not only pity and charity mentalities but also the surveillance, incarceration, and killing of people with disabilities. This, of course, does not account for the multitude of intersectional disability histories written out of how we understand "the past." We hold these assumptions of a lack of pastness alongside denials of futurity to explicitly expose the temporalities read onto disability and deployed through crisis logics: disability as imagined to be stuck within a perpetual present state of deficit and loss. Crip time not only demands a reconceptualization of disability within time, but in opening up the multiple ways of living disability in time, crip time also provides a lens through which to read progressive temporality's destructive and disciplinary mechanisms and their biopolitical implications.

States of instability and change perpetuate emergencies, in turn, making them into everyday experiences of chronicity and trauma. As Ben Anderson notes in his theorization of the everyday emergency, "a permanent 'state of emergency' is but one example of how the 'everyday' and 'emergency' blur in the midst of a background of perpetual instability

and change."[24] It is the systemic nature of structural violence, disorganizing and fragmenting access to resources, from electrical power to healthcare, that enacts a blurring of "everyday" and "emergency" categories of experience. Lauren Berlant's theorization of "crisis ordinariness" suggests such perpetual and/or cyclical encounters with crisis create new forms of living with and in relationship to vulnerability, precarity, and violence. The essays within our collection chart the forms and modes of living that emerge from such everyday emergency; such "crisis ordinariness." Putting an analysis of disability and crip time in relationship to these theorizations helps us to better see what is at stake in the mobilization of disability (in political discourse, the media, and policy implementations) within times of crisis *and* for the crip epistemologies that can intervene in such mobilizations.

Cripistemologies of Crisis

Cripistemologies of crisis builds upon Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer's 2014 theorization of cripistemologies. Notably, they route their theorizations "through a reconsideration of Eve Kosofky Sedgwick's *Epistemologies of the Closet* in order to bind cripistemology to crisis" and to pivot "away from certain dominant ways of knowing disability in our moment."[25] Johnson and McRuer take up the discomfort produced by the porous boundaries of disability to mark the need for theorizations that take account of the mechanisms that demarcate and legitimate disability. Much like Sedgwick's observation that the twentieth century is marked by a crisis of homo/heterosexuality, Johnson and McRuer suggest "that thought and knowledge in twenty-*first*-century Western culture as a whole is structured—indeed, fractured—by an endemic crisis of ability and disability."[26] This theoretical origin story maps the link between cripistemologies and the mechanisms of classification and biocertification processes central to the crisis logics that we seek to intervene in.

The essays within this special section may seem to take up very different forms of crisis—more seemingly material in their impact—than the meditations on taxonomic crisis that both Sedgwick and Johnson and McRuer open their interventions with. Yet, we contend that such distinctions between knowledge production, identity, and structural and material conditions foreclose the very analytical insights that cripistemologies offer and those most needed to address the current political and cultural moment marked by such perpetual states of urgency. Indeed, the lived biopolitical implications emergent from such taxonomic crises are the important "why" of such theorizations, in the first place. Johnson and McRuer tie crip theorization within the contemporary moment to a crisis marked by the tensions, productions, and fractures embedded within an ability/disability dialectic. As their theorization (and the interventions offered by the essays found here) makes clear, this dialectic is also embedded within the mobilization of "crisis" responses that make possible exceptionalized actions because crisis logics both depend upon distinctions between the disabled and the able-bodied and take advantage of the "crisis" of such categorical instability. In other words, the resistance of disability, illness, and vulnerability to clear categorizations not only causes crisis but is distinctively useful within and to crisis formations that rely on such definitional flexibility.

If cripistemology is, as Johnson and McRuer note, bound to crisis, then perhaps the title of "Cripistemologies of Crisis" is a bit redundant. Yet, as crip theorists who live and think through pain, illness, and trauma, redundancy—including the state of no longer being

needed or productive—perhaps perfectly reflects the starting point for the collection of essays gathered here. The sick, the pained, and the traumatized often come to signify redundancy, excess, and waste within a geopolitical landscape marked by expansive global capital, state-sanctioned violence, and neoliberal necropolitics. On another, connected register, redundancy can feel constitutive of experiences of illness, trauma, and pain—from the material realities of too much pain, too many sick days, and overlapping, excessive triggers to interactions with systems and structures that dismiss and deny those experiences, particularly for those marked by intersectional axes of disability, race, gender, class, and sexuality. Thus, we call attention to the redundancy embedded within the title as a way to name and mobilize these positions of dismissal, degradation, and excess that mark the points of theorization that our authors speak to and from. In fact, the title for the conference panel where these essays first appeared was, "Beyond Recovery: Cripistemologies of *Continuous* Crisis," further emphasizing the recursive and endemic experiences of crisis that characterize disabled, chronically ill, socially abandoned, and post-traumata lives that our authors theorize.

There is also an internal circularity to our collection of essays that reminds us of the value of lingering and multiple meditations. Our introduction and Whatcott's essay theorize cripistemologies of crisis to indict eugenic logics operating in the present day, that paradoxically produce and seek to purge (certain populations as) fantastically perceived agents of crisis. Spurgas and Carter engage with experiences of ongoing crises and lives shaped by trauma. Indeed, this parallelism compels us to ask: What are cripistemologies of crisis if they do not engage with experiences of trauma; and what is an analysis of trauma that does not consider the biopolitical matrix that continually shifts blame and culpability onto its most vulnerable?

Cripistemology and Survival (Or, What Do We Do with Our Cripistemology Theorizing?)

Critical disability studies and disability justice writings both come out of histories of exclusion within disability rights struggles and situate relational experiences and knowledges that have been on the margin of disability epistemologies. In a field-shifting special section-conversation in *Lateral* in 2016 and 2017, Julie Avril Minich, Sami Schalk, and Jina B. Kim articulate the stakes and contours of a critical disability studies *methodology*. Minich's essay initiates a conversation that invites us to consider *critical* disability studies as a *methodology* that exercises accountability with regard to the field's "origins in social justice work"—a goal that our special issue seeks to extend through explicit engagement with disability justice work and orientations.[27] Minich points to the field's silences around questions of race and asks us to take seriously the question of the *beneficiary of* disability studies and writes that the field's "scrutiny of normative ideologies should occur not for its own sake but *with the goal of producing knowledge in support of justice* for people with stigmatized bodies and minds" (emphasis in original).[28] Attentive to the slipperiness of stable and certifiable disability status, Sami Schalk argues, in her 2017 response to Minich's piece, "for the inclusion of illness and disease no matter what the current definitions of disability might be."[29] In the same issue, Jina B. Kim describes Minich's theorization as moving us beyond "the same questions of representation and legibility—what can currently be recognized *as* disability—but rather to the systemic de-valuation (and oftentimes, subsequent disablement) of non-normative bodies and

minds."[30] Kim's essay articulates a *crip-of-color critique* that attends to "relations of social, material, and prosthetic support—that is, the various means through which lives are enriched, enabled, and made possible," and which "honors vulnerability, disability, and inter/dependency, instead of viewing such conditions as evidence of political failure or weakness."[31]

Our collective attention to eugenic and crisis logics as a necropolitics of disability necessarily moves in support of justice for people whose experiences may not often be readily identified with disability, or at least not with the dominant image of the visibly disabled or mobility-impaired. Our authors draw from the insights of disability justice as key to simultaneously capturing the harm enacted by crisis logics and the value of knowledge produced by those most impacted by it. These, importantly, come through the experiences of racialized groups; those in chronic and under-recognized pain, or with nebulous diagnoses; groups vulnerable to environmental toxicity and with tenuous access to care and resources; populations routinely subject to traumas of social denigration. The *cripistemologies* of crisis that our authors offer call upon a crip-of-color methodology to center emergent minoritized epistemologies that inform our critical disability studies and disability justice theorizing and strategizing. Our contributors' essays, topic, and turn of phrase—cripistemologies of crisis—center nonwhite crip voices and lives and seek to further honor the forms of vulnerability and accountability that enrich and enable alternative forms of the future.

In her 2018 book, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*, disability justice organizer and author Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha positions disability justice dreams and crip knowledge as central to survival and resistance in the face of rising fascism, climate change, environmental toxicity, and state violence. She recalls the mobilization of survival tips garnered from living and moving in a world that actively tries to kill (or let die) queer, trans, black, and brown disabled in the wake of the California fires. Piepzna-Samarasinha writes, "With all our crazy, adaptive-deviced, loving kinship and commitment to each other, we will leave no one behind as we roll, limp, stim, sign and create the decolonial living future."[32] She follows up: "I am dreaming like my life depends on it. Because it does. And so does yours."[33] The dream of a future led by disability justice knowledge centers the creativity, resilience, and force that thrives within and in spite of ongoing and historical violence and does not obscure the conditions from whence such forms of creativity and resilience emerge. Disability justice knowledge *draws attention to* states and systems of ongoing crisis and violence because of the movement's commitment to centering the voices and experiences of those most marginalized and most impacted by state violence. The essays in our collection follow this commitment, bringing cripistemological theorizing of crisis directly into conversation with the dreams and knowledges produced by disability justice and intersectional social justice theorists.[34] In short, this special section joins calls within the field for a recognition of disability justice work as central to the future of critical disability studies.

The fires that Piepzna-Samarasinha describes, of course, are the very same that PG&E cites as the justification for the shut offs of 2019 that further threatened disabled lives and, in turn, made crip knowledge, kinship, and commitment to survival all the more necessary. In response to the PG&E shutoffs, disability justice activist Stacey Milbern similarly describes the skills, community, and resources that the Disability Justice Culture Club and disabled people tapped into to identify needs with available resources. Milbern echoes the specific knowledge of survival born from disability experiences, stating, "disabled people have done a lot of work around living interdependently and knowing how

to build support networks so when there is an emergency, we switch into things we do every day and it benefits the community as a whole."[35] This mobilization emerges from a recognition that, "Nobody else is going to save us, so we have to save ourselves."[36] The knowledge of what happens to disabled, poor, and older people of color in crisis—the lived experiences of abandonment, violence, and neglect—are the conditions of emergence for survival knowledge.

At the same time, do not these very conditions that Piepzna-Samarasinha, Milbern, and others describe—ongoing racialized, classed, xenophobic, and ableist violence—work to destroy the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to survive such assaults? How do we honor the knowledge and survival skills that disability/disabled living may offer when the task of simply trying to stay alive can prevent and frustrate the cultivation and sharing of this knowledge? We have lost far too many leaders of this work, far too soon, to not simultaneously reckon with the reality that such knowledge is conditioned by the precarity of those who produce, shepherd, and archive it. How do we account for the precariousness of both our lives and our knowledges in calls to value and center those most marginalized? And what role does critical disability studies, as a methodology, play in this process?

While these are questions that go beyond the space and scope of this introduction, they are also questions that require the breadth and reach of knowledge developed across interdisciplinary fields, activist spaces like those created by disability justice workers, and artist imaginaries. As we bind together cripistemologies, disability justice insights, and a crip-of-color critique, we are also expressing a need for theoretical work and praxis both within and outside of the academy to arrive at more just approaches to states of crisis. There are importantly different genealogies of this theorizing within and outside of the academy that we do not want to glide over in bringing these bodies of work together. Yet, given the stakes of such precarious and vital knowledge for our collective survival, we see the urgency of this "bringing together" as an important means by which to begin to meaningfully address such difficult questions as the ones we name above. Committed to questions of intellectual accountability, we and the authors in the special section—and the work that they engage with—suggest that crip theorizing on/of crisis offers a crucial companion for a larger project of producing, shepherding, and archiving (crip) knowledge across its multiple and overlapping paths. With this special section, we gather diverse traumatized, fracturing, empathetic knowledges into the rubric of cripistemologies of crisis to recognize these crip ways of thinkfeeling, being, and relating as a necessary form of theorizing.

Contributions to Crisis Knowing: Crip Selves, Experiences, and Futures

In elaborating on the intervention of critical disability methodology and crip-of-color critique in teaching and knowledge production, Jina B. Kim draws out a "refusal to view the university as the only legitimate site of knowledge production. [Women of color] feminist and disabled intellectuals have long written and theorized outside the boundaries of institutional approval, and their words have survived nonetheless."[37] Audre Lorde opens *The Cancer Journals* (1980) saying that she "believes our feelings need voice in order to be recognized, respected, and of use."[38] The essays in our collection offer

cripistemologies of crisis that listen to variously voiced feelings and experiences, and recognize and respectfully gather them to be of use toward survival and collective care. As well, the authors center activists, survivors, and visionaries of color as key theorists, enacting the collective and relational aspects of the project that Lorde lays out. Angela Carter's essay reads X González's speech as a site of critical disability knowledge production, turning to the youth activist and trauma survivor as a theorist—as a "legitimate site of knowledge production." Through the lens of survivors of gendered and sexual violence, Alyson Spurgas's essay attends to the experiential, daily lived experience of trauma as a gendered as well as raced and classed experience, and Jess Whatcott's reading of Butler's *Parable of the Sower* follows within the critical disability methodological turn toward Octavia Butler's texts as key sources toward imagining crip and crip-of-color futures.

Carter carefully reconceptualizes trauma through critical disability studies, advocating for a political/relational approach to trauma that allows us to see how it is socially constructed "even as it is held deep within our bodyminds." Carter cautions that, misrecognized, ontological and ongoing experiences of crisis and "ordinary" trauma are rarely valorized as trauma and are instead coded in racializing, gendering, pathologizing, and criminalizing ways. Countering a hermeneutic of victim blaming such as the one we describe in our opening example, Carter's analysis valorizes and invites us into trauma's unstable spacetimes. Carter contends that "definitions of trauma must be untethered from the 'event(s)' that may initiate it," which is associated with the tendency to rank and "certify" traumas. Carter's close reading of survivor-activist X González's speech models how to more fully engage with counter-hegemonic and counter-rehabilitative experiences as a way of being with trauma. Radically conceived invitations to move with—not against—trauma's spacetimes can, as Carter shows, be a source of coalition and community, reminding us of our deep interconnectedness, our interdependence. Interweaving personal reactions to González's speech with this theoretical intervention, Carter also models a process of *thinkfeeling* that underscores the very political/relational model of trauma she lays out by using the lines tethering her own spacetime of trauma and those González offers in the speech as a refraction point for crip theorizing.

Through a similar series of provocations and questions, Alyson Spurgas's contribution "illuminates the full spectrum of feminized trauma experiences" in ways that enact the theoretical leverage made possible by the very untethering of trauma from its singular "event" that Carter proposes. Spurgas suggests that a categorical refusal to listen to the experiences and knowledges of othered, vulnerable populations is covered over by hegemonic assumptions about trauma's ties to dissociation and unnarratability. Exposing this fundamental rhetorical violence in trauma discourse, Spurgas argues that a willful, political silencing has too long been misrecognized for a loss of language and looks toward the capacity for solidarity that can emerge from attending to voices of trauma, un-silenced. Her exploration of trauma as constitutive of femininity, along with her attention to continuous and mundane forms of trauma, considers the experiences of migrant trans women, articulating a coalitional counternarrative to dominant understandings of trauma. In doing so, Spurgas provides a theory of feminine fracturing capable of accounting for the forms of slow, chronic, ongoing violence experienced by multiply marginalized femmes and, thus, forwards a cripistemological intervention into the very symptomology that concretizes trauma—both within mental health care and the popular imaginary—within a white, middle-class subjectivity. Spurgas's and Carter's interventions make possible and foster the forms of recognizing and living (together) with (rather than the impossible

mandate to recover from) trauma's ongoing and systemic impact on multiply marginalized communities.

Closing out our special section, Whatcott engages with Octavia Butler's crip Black feminist speculative world-making, which, Whatcott makes clear, is indissociable from Butler's "diagnoses [of] the disabling conditions of precarity under neoliberalism." Building on the recognition of Butler's work as central to crip theorizing and Black disability studies specifically, Whatcott's analysis lays bare the paradoxical logics of eugenic ideologies that drive these "disabling contradictions of neoliberal governance," as they term them, and which we draw out here as a manifestation of racial capitalism. Within and beyond these conditions in Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, the protagonist Olamina leads a collective that, Whatcott argues, offers survival kits and practices that real collective networks—among readers and scholars of Butler, and arguably beyond—follow as maps for emerging and even thriving amid a world in crisis. Taking up the call to collectivity by way of relational trauma experiences and responses that both Carter and Spurgas outline, and which *Parable*'s Olamina also lives, Whatcott makes clear that "the anticipation of the failure of the status quo," as Butler's text details, needs to be central to cripistemological work.

Each of the essays, in their own way, takes up this question of how we listen—and to whom—in our quest for accountable crip knowledge production. It is not enough to attend to minoritized experiential knowledges without a situated interrogation of whose experiences we center in our crip theorizing, and of the violent conditions of racial capitalism within which these experiences take shape. Carter, Spurgas, and Whatcott all stake a claim in raising, and then answering, such questions. As Carter and Spurgas's essays carefully lay out, there is an ontological and continuous "tense" of trauma that shapes the experience of (feminized) communities of color and that requires attention to the specificities of trauma's temporal and spatial relationalities. And Whatcott's essay illustrates a speculative future of what (via Butler) we might accomplish if we not only listen but follow the lead of those most marginalized by state violences.

In engaging ways of being and knowing in the world that emerge from lives lived in and through trauma and crisis, our collection of essays values the paradigmatic importance of the critical, strategic, and caring epistemologies that variously disabled and racialized people produce in living with and through impairment and precarity. While marking and calling out the endemic structural violence that engenders such conditions in the first place, Carter, Spurgas, and Whatcott chart how lived experiences of debility, instability, and trauma can equip us to navigate states of local and global crisis in an emergent and socially fortifying modality. The cripistemologies of crisis that unfold across the essays offer indispensable lenses through which to rethink—and care for—our ongoing necropolitical, racial capitalist present, offering an epistemological toolkit to theorize and survive the lived impacts of such naturalized quotidian violence.

In Conclusion

Given the centrality of temporalities to cripistemologies of crisis, we want to acknowledge the time and space of our own thinking: marking the spacetime of our knowledge production in relation to lived crisis. We wrote the first full draft of this introduction in the midst of the first-wave of COVID-19, and wrapped up the edits just under a year later, amid another corporate-risk management-driven electrical outage with deadly consequences in

Texas. The ongoing pandemic has compelled us to explore cripistemologies within not only a protracted, global state of crisis but to also mark the individual related instantiations of said crisis on our local lives. During this time, cities across the world have moved in and out of states of emergency as cases ebbed and flowed and new epicenters of the pandemic emerged. The media was flooded with competing narratives of the virus' seriousness, fueled in no small part by state responses articulating greater concern about economic impact rather than the health and well-being of people—particularly of low-wage essential workers, often disproportionately people of color. Within the United States, the large number of gig workers as well as the lack of state healthcare, widespread testing, or social welfare has only further exposed the fault lines of social, political, and economic systems that are already known to so many.[39]

We have also observed these unfoldings from two different continents—Theodora in Washington DC and Aly in Prague—which made explicit the different temporalities of the global emergency and its relationship to state responses and neglect. For instance, the state of emergency and travel restrictions declared by both the US and the Czech Republic in March 2020 created its own form of risk-calculation as Aly weighed the heightened risk of the virus (particularly following the funneling of all incoming international flights to selected airports)[40] against the uncertainty of what remaining in the Czech Republic indefinitely might mean for visa requirements and work demands. A decision to stay, conditioned by heightened vulnerability to the virus, also underscored the privilege embedded within such a decision: from the ability to work remotely to an eventual temporary residency status (an opportunity created by the prolonged state of emergency) through partnership with an EU citizen.[41]

Further, the Czech Republic made international headlines in the first few months of the pandemic for its early adoption of masks and its relatively mild first wave. A collective national response to social distancing and movement restrictions meant that as the US saw climbing virus rates in the summer and debated reopening plans, the Czech Republic celebrated a reopening of minimal risk. During this time, the threat of the virus for Aly remained largely located in a different time and place: within a past first wave, a future resurgence, and within the US (as a risk to friends and loved ones). Yet, this shifted quickly when, in the fall, the Czech Republic overtook the United States in per-capita infection rates and became a prescient example of the dangers of unguarded and celebratory reopening. As the one-year mark of the border closures between Europe and the US approaches, the Czech Republic remains in a protracted lockdown, with new infection rates persistently high and further restrictions loom amidst new, more virulent variants. These changing restrictions again propelled rapid travel adjustments as Aly returned to the US to access the vaccine.[42]

Meanwhile, in DC, the experience has been one of compressed and suspended temporalities for Theodora, holed up in a tiny den in her shared apartment, whose privileged ability to work remotely (with all of the attendant precarity and exhaustions) as an adjunct professor has been counterbalanced with her partner's job as an essential worker continuing to go in to work at the Starbucks closest to the White House, rocked amid the pandemic year's surges of protest, uprisings, and finally insurrection. Time, during the fall semester, was suspended for Theodora as a high-risk family member became critically ill with COVID, spending six uncertain weeks in intensive care followed by six more weeks in a rehabilitation facility in Baltimore, more than an hour's drive away. Managing communication, care, and support for her sister and brother-in-law while teaching online and (not) processing the trauma of critical illness in one's inner circle has

nevertheless been from a position of great relative privilege, not least in the timing of the family member's illness between COVID peaks such that he could access needed care and supplies at a time of pandemic "lull," and after an initial peak in which much was learned through trial, error, and tragedy. Following his return home, Theodora's crisis orientation shifted to concern for her partner's safety amid threats of right-wing violence near the White House. Following the January 6 insurrection, her partner, whose job supplies her with health care benefits, has been primarily serving members of the national guard who have since taken up residence in the downtown hotels, creating new relational frames of reference to yet another form of crisis management.

These refractions and reflections from across space and time have only further underscored the need for the cripistemologies of crisis that the authors in our special section take up, as well as the need for continued, contextually specific, and localized knowledges of the lived experiences of crisis that we hope this conversation further invites and sparks. Arguments reiterating the relative "safety" of younger folks without underlying medical conditions echo across not only the two locales we occupy but much of the world media, implicitly positioning racialized essential workers, those with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and older adults as inherently vulnerable and, thus, inevitable casualties. In many ways mirroring the PG&E rhetoric around emergency measures, the global response to the coronavirus re-naturalizes vulnerability and risk within some of the most vulnerable. Calls to stay at home, wash your hands frequently, and self-quarantine also leave little options for people without homes, those living in provisional housing, or those without regular access to soap and water, as well as underpaid essential workers for whom such safety measures are denied, and whose establishments' bathrooms frequently serve underhoused people. The early pandemic stockpiling of goods and supplies similarly impacted those who cannot readily access excess funds, including those on fixed, unstable, or grossly insufficient incomes; including adjuncts without savings accounts, and whose credit cards already hover at the credit limit, if they have them. We now see this phenomenon of uneven access and care replaying on both a national and an international scale with vaccine rollouts. The emergency declarations across the globe further enable the crisis logics and attendant policy responses similar to those explored in our introduction, but have also inevitably produced new formations and combinations of uneven state support—such as stimulus checks, debt relief, and loan programs—and neglect that will inevitably add to the contours of ongoing crisis and emergency. The depiction of the coronavirus as a "Chinese" or "Wuhan" virus also means that the enactments of debilitation, abandonment, and precarity combine with racism and xenophobia to create further forms of violence and exclusion, more starkly bifurcating those who are targeted for emergency state support and those who are left to die.

While this unfolding crisis calls for dedicated critical analysis (which has already begun), as we have written this introduction in the context of multiple and shifting emergency measures, we cannot help but hope that readers find the issues taken up here as relevant to the current global crisis as they are to the specific contexts our authors take up.[43] The re-theorization of the temporalities of trauma and its relationship to racialized, classed, and gendered violence undoubtedly lends itself to the ongoing processes of making sense of the chronic state of stress that is differentially impacting us all. Cripping our understandings of crisis through a centering of trauma further grounds cripistemologies of crisis to the bodyminds of those most impacted by the violence that we and our authors engage with. Following the insights of our authors, then, we suggest that cripistemologies of crisis offer ways to thinkfeel through more relational and fractured responses to the unfolding moment that at once anticipate the failures of the status quo.

The possibilities that such cripistemologies of crisis open, of course, are mixed with a desperate urgency to guard against the harm of crisis logics that this knowledge seeks to remake.[44] We have seen collective crip responses to COVID-19: the mobilization of care, resource sharing, and the fierce calls to center communities of color, disabled, chronically ill, and older adults in emergency planning and vaccine prioritization. From within these same groups, crip knowledges of surviving prolonged isolation, navigating with immunocompromised conditions, facilitating alternative and remote access to meetings, events, and activities, practicing social distancing, and creatively problem-solving seemingly impossible situations have, indeed, been the skills the world needs to survive this crisis and those that follow. The question remains, of course, to what extent these knowledges are recognized as part of future-building work, and to what extent the crisis logics that dismiss and devalue disabled lives will dismiss and devalue crip knowledge. One of the failures we might anticipate, then, is the ways in which crisis logics will operate through an extraction and ultimate dismissal of such knowledges. Crip practices of upending our understandings of emergency— interrupting, slowing down, and creating space to listen within the silencing agenda of crisis logics—offers a vital pathway to safeguarding and honoring the crip knowledges of survival that our authors follow. In other words, cripistemologies of crisis are necessary to resist the almost inevitable devaluation of crip knowledge by locating its value within the bounded spacetime of hegemonic crisis logics. Only by exposing and remaking our understandings of crisis can we fully nurture the survival of our communities' knowledges, legacies, and lives.

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Notes

1. Tim Arango, Jose A. Del Real, and Ivan Penn, "5 Lessons We Learned From the California Wildfires," *The New York Times*, November 4, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/04/us/fires-california.html < https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/04/us/fires-california.html> .

2. Arango, Real, and Penn, "5 Lessons."

3. Emma Newburger, "'There Are Lives at Stake': PG&E Criticized over Blackouts to Prevent California Wildfires," CNBC, October 23, 2019, https://www.cnbc.com/2019/10/23/pge-rebuked-over-imposing-blackouts-in-california-to-reduce-fire-risk.html < https://www.cnbc.com/2019/10/23/pge-rebuked-over-imposing-blackouts-in-california-to-reduce-fire-risk.html> .

4. Arango, Real, and Penn, "5 Lessons We Learned From the California Wildfires"; Newburger, "'There Are Lives at Stake.'"

5. Richard Gonzalez, "California Can Expect Blackouts For A Decade, Says PG&E CEO," NPR.org, October 18, 2019, https://www.npr.org/2019/10/18/771486828/california-can-expect-blackouts-

for-a-decade-says-pg-e-ceo < https://www.npr.org/2019/10/18/771486828/california-can-expect-blackouts-for-a-decade-says-pg-e-ceo> .

6. s.e. smith, "Disabled People Scramble to Cope When California Kills Power to Prevent Wildfire," *talkpoverty*, October 4, 2019, https://talkpoverty.org/2019/10/04/prevent-power-wildfires-disabled/ < https://talkpoverty.org/2019/10/04/prevent-power-wildfires-disabled/> .

7. Vivian Ho, "California Power Shutoff: How PG&E's Actions Hit the Medically Vulnerable the Hardest," *The Guardian*, October 11, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/oct/11/california-pge-utility-power-shutoff-disabled < https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/oct/11/california-pge-utility-power-shutoff-disabled> .

8. This formulation of ours draws on a heterogenous archive, which includes Jodi Melamed's extension of Cedric Robinson's conceptualization of racial capitalism, where capitalism is always-already racializing. As Melamed writes, "these antinomies of accumulation require loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires." As we elaborate, crisis logics operate upon an individualizing and ahistoricizing logic, which also find resonance with the further nuanced understanding of racial capitalism "as a system of expropriating violence on collective life itself." Jodi Melamed, "Racial Capitalism," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 77–78, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/jcritethnstud.1.1.0076 < https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/jcritethnstud.1.1.0076> . Our formulation of a necropolitics of disability is here in conversation with the "necropolitical turn" that Achille Mbembe's 2003 essay and now 2019 book have laid out. The "necropolitical turn" builds upon Foucaultian biopolitics, but conceives of "politics as the work of death" and links biopower to Agamben's "state of exception." In other words, necropolitics helps us to understand racial capitalism as a system in which some are marked for death as opposed to life. Achille Mbembe and Steve Corcoran, *Necropolitics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 70, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478007227 < https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478007227> . See also Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40, https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11 < https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11> . Finally, we are also in conversation with David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder's elaboration of the biopolitics of disability in *The Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015).

9. We take up Margaret Price's formation of bodymind here as a means of acknowledging the interconnectedness of bodies and minds. See Margaret Price, "The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain," *Hypatia* 30, no. 1 (2015): 268–284, doi 10.1111/hypa.12127.

10. "PG&E Medical Baseline Allowance," accessed February 4, 2020, https://www.pge.com/en_US/residential/save-energy-money/help-paying-your-bill/longer-term-assistance/medical-condition-related/medical-baseline-allowance/medical-baseline-allowance.page?WT.mc_id=Vanity_medicalbaseline < https://www.pge.com/en_US/residential/save-energy-money/help-paying-your-bill/longer-term-assistance/medical-condition-related/medical-baseline-allowance/medical-baseline-allowance.page?WT.mc_id=Vanity_medicalbaseline> .

11. Ellen Samuels, *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

12. Anna Mollow, "Criphystemologies: What Disability Theory Needs to Know about Hysteria," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 2 (July 5, 2014): 185–201.

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14. Ignagni, Chandler, and Erikson, "Crips and COVID in Canada."

15. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, MA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

16. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

17. Ben Anderson, "Emergency/Everyday," in *Time: A Vocabulary of the Present*, ed. Joel Burges and Amy Elias (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

18. João Biehl, *Vita: Life in the Zone of Social Abandonment* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520272958/vita < https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520272958/vita> ; Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674072343 < https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674072343> ; Elizabeth Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), https://www.dukeupress.edu/economies-of-abandonment < https://www.dukeupress.edu/economies-of-abandonment> ; Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), www.dukeupress.edu/the-right-to-maim.

19. Ellen Samuels, "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (August 31, 2017), https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i3.5824 < https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i3.5824> ; Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/isbn/9780253009340 < http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/isbn/9780253009340> ; Robert McRuer, *Crip Times:Disability, Globalization, and Resistance* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), http://nyupress.org/books/9781479874156/; Petra Kuppers, "Crip Time," *Tikken* 29, no. 4 (2014): 29–30, https://doi.org/10.1215/08879982-2810062 < https://doi.org/10.1215/08879982-2810062> .

20. Margaret Price, "Crip Spacetime: Some Thoughts Away from the Neoliberal University," in *States of Emergence* (American Studies Association, Atlanta, 2018).

21. Samuels, "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time."

22. Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 3..

23. In *Brilliant Imperfection*, writer and theorist Eli Clare notes the assumption of past able-bodiedness, even of people with congenital disabilities. In this sense, all disabilities have an origin of disablement, as all are considered deviations from an imagined state of able-bodied normalcy. Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling With Cure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 15.

24. Anderson, "Emergency/Everyday." 185.

25. Merri Johnson and Robert McRuer, "Cripistemologies," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 127–48, https://doi.org/10.3828/jlcds.2014.12 < https://doi.org/10.3828/jlcds.2014.12> .

26. Johnson and McRuer, "Cripistemologies," 131.

27. Julie Avril Minich, "Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now," *Lateral* 5, no.1 (2016): https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.9 < https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.9> .

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31. Kim, "Toward a Crip-of-Color Critique."

32. Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018), 135; Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "To Survive the Trumpocalypse, We Need Wild Disability Justice Dreams," *Truthout,* May 20, 2018, https://truthout.org/articles/to-survive-the-

trumpocalypse-we-need-wild-disability-justice-dreams/ < https://truthout.org/articles/to-survive-the-trumpocalypse-we-need-wild-disability-justice-dreams/> .

33. Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work,* 135; Piepzna-Samarasinha, "To Survive the Trumpocalypse."

34. We name disability justice activists as theorists here to acknowledge the critical work that activists, artists, and thought-makers within disability justice movements do.

35. Ho, "California Power Shutoff."

36. Ho, "California Power Shutoff."

37. Kim, "Toward a Crip-of-Color Critique."

38. Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals.* (San Francisco: Spinsters|Aunt Lute, 1980), 9.

39. The declaration of the events of January 6, 2021, when Trump supporters stormed the US capital, as a "crisis of democracy" similarly underscores the fault lines of a system that, for many, has never reflected the idealized democracy now deemed under threat.

40. The restriction of international flights to selected airports lead to chaotic scenes of people funneling in from all over the world trapped in unventilated spaces without masks, sanitizer, or the ability to distance for hours on end. Images from Chicago's O'Hare airport illustrating these conditions went viral just forty-eight hours prior to Aly's scheduled flight back to the US. See, for instance, Carly Behm and Jake Wittich, "Pritzker tweets 'federal government needs to get its s@#t together' after coronavirus screenings cause delays, crowds at O'Hare," *Chicago Sun Times*, March 15, 2020, https://chicago.suntimes.com/2020/3/14/21180161/coronavirus-ohare-customs-screening-hours-long-wait < https://chicago.suntimes.com/2020/3/14/21180161/coronavirus-ohare-customs-screening-hours-long-wait> .

41. This application process conditioned, further, by the ambiguity of whether the category of temporary residency through an EU family member would extend to a same-sex partnership not previously recognized by the state (through marriage or formal partnership registration—both of which are formal recognitions that find partnership where couples live predominately in separate countries to be "unrecognizable" as partnership). Ironically, the state of emergency, then, opened up the time and space to apply for a visa that granted a path to legal recognition that will make possible future extended travel. Yet, it became clear that Aly's US citizenship and her partner's EU citizenship provided privileged access to her temporary residency application, as reports that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs "Agenda of Love," the publicized celebration of granting family reunification visas, did not apply to non-EU citizens and predominantly included US and Czech couples. See Samantha Tatro, "'Sweetheart Visa' reunited hundreds of couples during the pandemic, but many still left apart," *Expat.cz,* October 22, 2020, https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/so-called-sweetheart-visa-helped-hundreds-of-couples-reunite-during-the-pandemic-but-some-have-been-left-behind < https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/so-called-sweetheart-visa-helped-hundreds-of-couples-reunite-during-the-pandemic-but-some-have-been-left-behind> .

42. This access, of course, is conditioned by the privilege of US citizenship status, the ability to wait for flight safety measures requiring negative-COVID tests, the ability to pay for travel, and tier-status allowing early vaccination.

43. See, for instance, Nilika Mehrotra, and Karen Soldatic, ed."Special Issue: COVID-19 in South Asia," *Disability & the Global South* 8, no. 1 (2021), https://dgsjournal.org/vol-8-no-1/ < https://dgsjournal.org/vol-8-no-1/> ; Ironstone, Penelope and Greg Bird, ed. "Our COVID Conjuncture: Critical Essays on the Pandemic," *TOPIA*: *Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 41 (Fall 2020), https://utpjournals.press/toc/topia/41 < https://utpjournals.press/toc/topia/41> .

44. By remake, we are drawing on Carrie Sandahl's definition of "cripping" as a verb, where she describes the dual process of exposing in order to remake assumptions about able-bodiedness and disability. See Carrie Sandahl, "Cripping the Queer or Queering the Crip?: Intersections of Queer and Crip Identities in Solo Autobiographical Performances," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and*

Gay Studies 9, no. 1 (2003), https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.cc.uic.edu/article/40804 < https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.cc.uic.edu/article/40804> .

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View all of Theodora Danylevich's articles.

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View all of Alyson Patsavas's articles.

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When Silence Said Everything: Reconceptualizing Trauma through Critical Disability Studies

by Angela Carter | Cripistemologies of Crisis: Emergent Knowledges for the Present, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT Reading X González's, March 24, 2018, "March For Our Lives" speech—their words and silences—as an entry point into what I term a crip theory of trauma, this essay argues that the dominant narratives about and around Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) say more about the compulsivity of the "proper" citizen subject than they do the actual embodied experience and debilitation of trauma itself. The text reconceptualizes trauma narratives, like González's, through critical disability studies to argue that certain cripistemologies—or crip ways of knowing—trauma arise that are not otherwise available or readily accessible. Most notably, by rejecting dominant pathologizing forces and embracing crip ways of knowing, this analysis brings forth a new working definition of trauma, as an embodied, affective structure. These ways of knowing offer crucial insights for efforts to grapple with the ongoing forms of trauma enacted and perpetuated across the globe, and are particularly urgent against a political and cultural landscape that, as my reading of González's speech makes clear, in many ways refuses to hear, see, and learn from the knowledge that trauma produces.

KEYWORDS cripistemology, critical disability studies, trauma

> I may feel that without some recognizability I cannot live. But I may also feel that the terms by which I am recognized make life unlivable. This is the juncture at which critique emerges, where critique is understood as an interrogation of the terms by which life is constrained in order to open up the possibility of different modes of living; in other words, not to celebrate difference as such but to establish more inclusive conditions for sheltering and maintaining life that resists models of assimilation. – Judith Butler[1]

In a high-profile opinion piece for *TIME* magazine's "100 Most Influential People of 2018," President Barack Obama wrote that the survivor-activists of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida had changed the gun debate in America.[2] There is a usual and predictable response to these tragedies, President Obama tells his readers. "We mourn. Offer thoughts and prayers. Speculate about the motives. And then…the political debate spirals into acrimony and paralysis."[3] This time, though, something was different. This time, according to the president, the high school students who survived the mass shooting were changing this response pattern—and changing the terms of the debate—altogether.

President Obama is not alone in this assessment. Almost immediately after the shooting

on February 14, 2018 the media shifted focus away from the narrative trajectory President Obama so astutely described. The alternative narratives presented by the survivor-activists were now dominating news headlines and social media news feeds. On February 20, 2018, David Cullen of *Politico* wrote, "I've been covering mass shootings for decades. I've never seen a phenomenon like these students."[4] On February 21, *The Washington Post* published a piece deliberating "Why the Parkland Kids Might Be Different."[5] And on February 28, Michelle Cottle of *the Atlantic* contemplated, "How Parkland Students Changed the Gun Debate."[6] Indeed, the organizing efforts and media savvy of the Parkland survivor-activists is to be commended. Through protests, marches, and commanding visits to both local and national politicians, the Parkland survivor-activists were refusing to allow the discourse to "spiral into acrimony and paralysis."[7] Most notably, their ability to utilize media to their advantage, utilize social media to further their cause, and publicly outwit their political opponents, left even the most "jaded political and media types" impressed.[8]

However, in the analysis that follows, I argue that the Parkland survivor-activists are doing much more than changing "the gun debate," or disrupting our nation's tired response pattern to mass shootings or gun violence. I contend that, through their activism, the youth of Parkland are working to reconceptualize trauma—to create space for alternative understandings of trauma, writ large. This writing is part theory, part analysis, and part process; admittedly, it's a bit messy, but that's because trauma is messy and demands nothing less of us as scholar-educators. In Part One, I reconceptualize trauma through the overlapping frameworks of critical disability studies (CDS) and critical trauma studies (CTS). I maintain that we must redefine trauma from the theoretical junctures of these two interdisciplines if we are to *fully* attend to the embodied experiences, material realities, and sociopolitical causes and consequences of trauma. Part Two further extrapolates the theoretical underpinnings presented in Part One through a CDS analysis of X González's speech on March 24, 2018 at the Washington, DC "March for Our Lives" rally.[9] Throughout their narrative-performance, González unapologetically presents the embodied affect of trauma.[10] Moreover, their words and silences underscore what I call trauma's attributes of instability: time and space, subjectivity, and knowledge. As a result, González's narrative-performance critiques the social norms and stigmatizations that subdue traumatized bodyminds, and thus creates space for alternative understanding of trauma.[11] Lastly, in Part Three, I take up Alison Kafer's political/relational model of disability to theorize a germinal counterpart: a political/relational model of trauma.[12] Using both González's speech and the ongoing efforts of March For Our Lives, I contend that a political/relational model of trauma, as praxis for social justice and profound healing, will shift the dreadful, terrorizing realities of mass violence and collective suffering in the United States.

Trauma taught me not to cry. Not crying means surviving a world where narratives about your existence do nothing but negate your existence. But I cannot stop crying as I listen to X's speech. Their words are my words; their silences are my silences. I cannot stop the tears as they roll down my cheeks. "GO EMMA!" shouts some loud man. "Go EMMA! You can do it!" I immediately feel angry—so intensely angry. Why are you yelling?!? They know they can do it! They are doing it! Be quiet. Shut up and listen to them! It's as if no one in the crowd can just be *with them. Just be what they need right now, what they are asking of you right now. No one knows how to hear them. You are too busy pushing your own narratives onto X. Stop! Listen! Just listen to them. They are saying it all. Everything. X is saying everything! You don't listen because they aren't speaking your*

language. Theirs is a language of half sentences and silences, and you don't know how to hear it. "NEVER AGAIN! NEVER AGAIN! NEVER AGAIN!" you shout. Stop shouting! Stop talking! Listen! Listen to X! Listen to us! Listen to us. Listen to me.

X starts to cry, and I cry harder. Other people's narratives of me flood my mind: "You've overcome so much," "You're such an inspiration," "You never let your past define you," "It's such a miracle you didn't die," "If other people just worked as hard as you do . . . " X and their friends are bombarded with these narratives nationally, while learning to live with trauma in their bodyminds. I feel kinship. It feels like my heart is breaking. I keep crying. I cannot breathe. I cannot remember how to breathe. On the screen, X is inhaling deeply, like they too are trying to remember breath. Their face scrunches up just like mine and then I feel the room spinning and all I can think about are the people who can't breathe because of trauma . . . all the people, dead and alive, who can't breathe . . . [13]

Part One: Redefining Trauma

While its definition is highly debated, leading trauma theorist Cathy Caruth broadly describes trauma as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena."[14] The experiences of the Parkland survivor-activists may certainly meet this general definition. However, this mainstream understanding often produces a pathologization of trauma and limits our ability to attend to the nuances of personal trauma narratives, such as González's. To make space for and increase recognition of diverse experiences of trauma—of trauma's complex narratives, multiple narratives, counter-narratives, and even anti-narratives—we must redefine trauma altogether. Indeed, I am calling for a conceptual rescuing of trauma.[15] If we are to ever break out of the ineffectual, cyclical patterns of political responses to events like the Parkland shooting, we must first uncouple trauma from pathology, and thus, from the clinical connotations that currently define and overshadow it within the US imaginary.

In the 1980s and 1990s, feminists raised questions about the hegemonic underpinnings of trauma's most dominant definitions. As Laura S. Brown succinctly notes, "trauma is thus that which disrupts these particular lives, but no other."[16] When reflecting on the 1987 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) criteria of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as including the person having "experienced an event that is outside the range of human experience," Brown notes that "the range of human experience becomes the range of what is normal and usual in the lives of men and the dominant class; white, young, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian Men."[17] While the phrase "outside the range of human experience" has since been removed from the DSM, Brown's reflection remains relevant. Trauma is typically, culturally recognized only when it disrupts particular lives—lives that should *not* be disrupted. When trauma disrupts "disposable" lives, few notice—or, if they do, they rarely stop to name the disruption "trauma."[18]

More recently, critical trauma theorists have moved even further away from generalizing frameworks.[19] My work is in conversation with scholars like Monica Casper and Eric Wertheimer, who outline CTS as the study of "the ways that the category of 'trauma'

reveals and unsettles cultural classification systems."[20] This definition of trauma as a "category" converges, for me, with Sami Schalk's definition of "(dis)ability" as "the overarching social system of bodily and mental norms that include ability and disability."[21] Like Schalk, I find it useful to differentiate between the social system of privilege/oppression and the corresponding individual experience. Relatedly, the work of Maurice E. Stevens and Ann Cvetkovich deeply informs my understanding of trauma. Stevens, in particular, writes that, "*trauma* is not simply a concept that describes particularly overwhelming events, nor is it simply a category that 'holds' people who have been undone by such events; but it is a cultural object whose function produces particular types of subjects, and predisposes specific affect flows that it then manages and ultimately shunts into political projects of various types."[22]

In her work *An Archive of Feeling*, Cvetkovich goes further, soundly rejecting pathologizing approaches to trauma and aiming instead to "seize authority over trauma discourses from medical and clinical discourse in order to place it back in the hands of those who make cultures, as well as to forge new models for how affective life can serve as the foundation for public culture."[23] With this, Cvetkovich's work explores how the everyday artifacts of trauma produce an "affective experience that falls outside of institutionalized or stable forms of identity or politics," which reverberates along the same lines as Jina B. Kim's (and others) pivotal work developing a "crip-of-color" critique.[24]

Disability studies, however, remains "remarkably silent" on matters of trauma, and trauma studies says little about disability or the social construction of "abnormality."[25] In his 2004 piece, "Trauma without Disability, Disability without Trauma: A Disciplinary Divide," James Berger argues that the fields have differing "premises, methods, and goals" and that there is no shared conceptual vocabulary.[26] Traditionally, disability studies has taken up the "important political and intellectual work" of "recast[ing] disability as something more than inherently traumatic."[27] Trauma studies, on the other hand, remains tied to psychoanalytic and clinical approaches of PTSD, and/or consumed with thinking through trauma as a metaphor.[28] Of course, disability scholars and activists are highly critical of turning embodied differences into metaphors, as this practice underpins ableist ideologies and structural violence.[29] In addition, disability studies arose out of a political movement and so scholars often write with a "spirit of advocacy," routinely employing personal narratives and claiming a disabled identity.[30] This is not the case with trauma studies. Theorists of trauma, particularly those concerned with its semiotics, rarely frame their work as political or locate themselves within their own theorizing.[31] A study of trauma grounded in both CDS and CTS must develop more fully, because though not all instances of disability are traumatizing, many disabilities are produced by traumatic experiences (e.g., war, assaults, accidents). Moreover, disabled people are at least two times more likely than our non-disabled peers to experience violence and trauma because of our marginalized positions in society.[32] Disabilities, particularly those occurring later in life, also often come with the kind of immense loss, grief, and mourning typically attributed to trauma.[33] And trauma itself can be debilitating and disabling.

While these ideas may seem theoretical in nature, I present them with the profound belief in the power of theory for healing.[34] *Something dramatic shifted within me when I began to thinkfeel about my own traumas differently. When I began to understand trauma as a way of feeling, being, moving, and knowing the world, I no longer felt*

pressured to "overcome" something that seemed to be a part of who I was. All of a sudden, I was able to find something like composure during my "breakdowns" because I started to think about myself as fluid, changing, flowing, rather than something solid that was broken and in need of fixing. I began to find a kind of calmness during my "flashbacks" because I began to imagine myself floating through space and time. These flashbacks were not something to forcefully interrupt but instead moments let play out with compassion. None of this came from therapy; it came from theory.

From the juncture of CDS and CTS, I've come to understand trauma as an embodied, affective structure that falls outside the hegemonic norms constituting social legibility—even as it is held deep within our bodyminds. This embodied, affective structure is specific, not to the horrendousness of an event or events, but rather to the debilitating sociopolitical responses and the overlapping attributes of instability that so often accompany it.[35] For some, this affect and its corresponding instabilities may be traceable to a single occurrence categorizable as "traumatic." For many, this affect and/or these instabilities arise from the uneven distribution of life chances and the unequal distribution of resources therein.[36]

Let me provide three further clarifications.

First, I use the words "affective structure" with caution—I am not implying any sort of organization or arrangement (indeed, I consider "affective un-structure" a more accurate description). Rather, I am directly borrowing the terminology "affective structure" from affect theorists Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg to denote "visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral)—a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability."[37] Trauma, I am arguing, is such a visceral force—a state of being and feeling that is "beyond emotion," and that lives deep within the bodymind.[38]

Second, I argue that the current over-attention placed on the so-called traumatic "events of origin" is misguided and that definitions of trauma must be untethered from the "event(s)" that may initiate it. Focusing solely on the etiologies of trauma risks yielding a hierarchy of "what counts" as trauma and what events are "traumatic" enough. The embodied, affective structure of trauma may come from a catastrophic, "exceptional" event for some, or it might come from what Lauren Berlant calls "crisis ordinariness" for others.[39] Moreover, while any individual may experience hardship, crisis, and/or catastrophe, *trauma,* as I am positioning it here, is marked by an affective embodiment that disrupts the ability to perform the hegemonic standards of personhood. This shift moves away from a focus on the event(s) and centers the form of trauma on the experience or way-of-being. Trauma is an often-disabling phenomenological modality. For privileged individuals and populations, this embodied, affective structure of trauma may come and go, as they are more likely to have access to necessary resources for care. Indeed, PTSD, as a rubric for meaning making, was constructed with this temporary and normative framework in mind.[40] One must have access to (at least imagining) the "good life" pre-trauma in order to envision returning to the good life post-trauma.[41] For disadvantaged individuals and populations, those who are denied equal access to resources and life chances, the embodied, affective structure of trauma often calcifies and can pass down through generations.[42] The

ongoing ideologies of white supremacy, heterocispatriachy, and racialized global capitalism mean that these latter experiences of trauma are rarely recognized as trauma, but rather coded in other racializing, gendering, pathologizing, and criminalizing ways. For example, it was not until George Floyd's murder that some white people began to recognize the systemic traumas Black Americans face at the hands of the police-state. Rather, these narratives of Black trauma have been and are still used to further pathologize, criminalize, and racialize Black people in the US. The causes of trauma do matter insofar as scholars and activists are concerned—which we should be—with working to alleviate structural inequities that leave particular people and populations more vulnerable than others. However, attention must be placed on systemic and structural inequities that consequently lead to higher vulnerabilities, rather than overemphasizing the events which are in fact the consequences not the origins.

Lastly, the critical approach to trauma presented here is fundamentally a crip approach, in that it seeks to take "a sledgehammer to—that which has been concretized" about trauma in the US imaginary.[43] Like queer theory, crip theory unsettles what we assume to be naturalized or known about the bodymind.[44] Canonized by Robert McRuer and Carrie Sandall, "cripping" as a verb and methodology "exposes the ways in which able-bodiedness and able-mindedness get naturalized and the ways that bodies, minds, and impairments that should be at the absolute center of a space or issue or discussion get purged from that space or issue or discussion."[45] Utilizing crip theories, my critical approach to trauma seeks then to do the same and recenter traumatized bodyminds in the discussion. In his now canonical work *Crip Theory,* McRuer establishes crip theory (at least in part), by reframing disability through Butlerian terms. McRuer explains, "the theory of gender trouble might be signified in the context of queer/disability studies to highlight what we could call 'ability-trouble,'—meaning not the so-called problem of disability but the inevitable impossibility, even as it is made compulsory, of an able-bodied identity."[46] Just as queer theory serves as a critical interrogation of heteronormativity, crip theory aims to deconstruct the otherwise latent paradigms of ableism while showing the intrinsic interconnectedness of both as a system of oppression.[47] Extending McRuer's analysis, I suggest reconceptualizing trauma through crip theory in order to deconstruct and resist marginalizing notions of normative embodiment. If queer theory shows the culturally constructed, perpetual impossibility of gender, and crip theory shows the co-constitutive socially constructed, equally impossible notion of able-bodiedness/-mindedness—then a critical approach to trauma must show the cultural construction and inevitable impossibility of an embodied, continuous sense of bodymind stability. This is what I like to call trauma's "stability trouble."[48]

It is only through the assumption of a coherent and continuous sense of bodymind stability that another kind of embodiment could become understood as disrupted or traumatized. Thus, the normalized or un-traumatized bodymind is constituted precisely through the very process of marking the traumatized bodymind, as Other. It is this assumed and culturally valued continuous sense of bodymind stability that is problematically left as unquestioned in prevalent trauma theory. Those of us with trauma in our bodyminds become unrecognizable—we fall outside of social systems of recognizability—when we can no longer hide our experiences of instability. As an embodiment, an affect held deep within the bodymind, trauma so often destabilizes us. Trauma disrupts how we experience the world; how we move through the world; how we come to (un)(not)know the world; how we come to (un)(not)know ourselves and others.

This argument is not new. However, by situating trauma at the convergence of CDS and CTS, I seek to engage with these instabilities in an unconventional, crip way. If we can learn to create space, hold space, for what I've termed trauma's "attributes of instability," these interwoven epistemic, ontological, and temporal-spatial disruptions may bring with them pathways toward social change and collective healing, worthy of our attention.[49]

Part Two: Trauma's Attributes of Instability

On March 24, 2018, ten days after the successful "National School Walkout," over eight hundred "March for Our Lives" rallies occurred simultaneously around the United States.[50] Broadcast live, the Washington, DC rally brought in hundreds of thousands of people and included performances by pop stars like Miley Cyrus and Demi Lovato. There were notable speeches by youth activists of color such as Naomi Wadler, Edna Chavez, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's granddaughter, Yolanda Renee King.[51] Of course, remarks were given by many Parkland survivor-activists—including one of the key organizers and most prominent voices, survivor-activist X González.[52] When it was their turn to speak, González walked with a commanding presence to center stage. Their head was tilted slightly upward; their face showed a solemn look. They tapped the podium with impatience and looked up for a moment scanning the crowd with that same impatience in their eyes. Then they smirked and showed the audience their combat boots. As a proud, outspoken, young bisexual person of Cuban decent, González has quickly become one face of a political landscape being built by and for queer youth of color.[53] At the same time, their shaved head and green jacket, adorned with countless pins and patches, signified a kind radicalism that made them not only a target of the Far Right, but unfortunately also that of many self-described mainstream Americans.[54]

When they began, González started by noting the time it took for the Parkland shooter to enter the school, murder seventeen of their classmates, and leave the building without notice. Using anaphora, they continued, "No one understood…" "No one could believe…" "No one knew…" "No one could comprehend…" González proceeed to name every person who was murdered that afternoon. Then, for over four minutes, they stopped speaking entirely. Standing on the stage they stared directly forward, not at the crowd, but beyond it—creating an unnerving tension and holding their audience in it. They refused to break this tension even as the audience shouted, clapped, chanted, and tried to interrupt the visible distress they were witnessing. González's silence never broke. Their face clenched and they cried, as though each of the chants' repetitions was a repeated wound. Through their silence the cameras shuffled nervously back and forth between the crowd and González at nine times the rate of the spoken part of their narrative-performance. The silence and tension continued until González's timer beeped. With anger in their voice again, they announced the six minutes and twenty seconds since they came on stage—the exact time it took for the shooter to kill their classmates and leave undeterred. Without giving us any time to process, González immediately walked away with the same forceful demeanor that demanded our attention over six minutes ago.

My heart has been searching for a narrative like X's for longer than I can remember. The audience can't sit with their silences, their unfinished thoughts. But their silences said everything to me. I've never lived through a school shooting. X's trauma is not my own.

But our traumas are not so disconnected either. As a child I experienced gun violence in the context of domestic abuse during the first ten years of my life. I grew older and I grew into more traumas, as we so often do, including sexual violences and a disabling car accident—all of which compounded into my bodymind and into my selfhood. There is a paradox within trauma narratives. X knows this. Many presume that trauma cannot be spoken because the experience is so horrifying that it cannot be narrated. X and I know different. Trauma can be narrated. The problem is there are few discursive spaces that actually allow the speaker to be heard.

Once traumatized, the silences of trauma are immediately seized upon by discourse. One of three things might occur; they often occur at the same time:

1. *You're ignored or dismissed. Your trauma is denied, downplayed, and/or rejected.*
2. *You're pitied. You're in need of help. Therapy. Recovery. God. Healing. Your trauma is an opportunity for others to exercise compassion.*
3. *You're a miracle, inspirational. You're here because God had other plans for you. You've overcome so much, a poster child. Your experience is turned into cliches.*

If you want your trauma to be acknowledged, you must talk about your experience through a particular, recognizable narrative.[55] *These narrative frameworks trap us. They turn trauma into a commodity, easy for others to consume—a spectacle for audiences to take in without having to truly bear witness, hold space, or face their own belief systems. I've felt trapped in this narrative limbo for so long, lost in this unrecognizability, that I think I gave up trying to talk about my traumas. Then I heard X's silences and finally I could hear my own.*

To the everyday viewer-listener, González's narrative-performance reflects their horrifying experience during the Parkland shooting. Their speech emphasizes trauma's unpredictability, its incomprehensibility, the tragedy of unfulfilled lives, and the unsettling memories that the survivor-activists now carry with them. For me, however, what González said and didn't say opens up alternative ways to think about trauma altogether. When González's narrative-performance is closely analyzed through CDS, three overlapping and nuanced attributes of trauma emerge: time and space, subjectivity, knowledges. Each is tethered to the others by trauma's most salient attribute, instability. González's speech brings forth an opportunity to reconsider the meanings we commonly make out of the instabilities of trauma and our collective response to each of these three overlapping attributes therein.

The first and most recurring attribute of trauma González's speech offers for reinterpretation is the significance of time and space. Within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (or DSM), the most commonly referenced experiences of time- and space-related trauma are flashbacks, nightmares, and triggers. Challenging the DSM's pathologizing logics, CDS scholars offer a radically different approach to thinking about such experiences within and through time and space. Margaret Price's recent work on "crip spacetime" begins by presenting the combined term, indicating what we intrinsically know—that the two are always already experienced as one.[56] For Price, "the spacetime we move through and which constitutes us is composed not only of geometric space and linear time, but also of the affective impact and intangible knowledges that manifest these radical inequities."[57] Price goes on to argue that even when we may be side by side, we do not inhabit the same spacetime

and these differences, "are often a matter of violent inequity, even of life or death."[58] I extend Price's theorization of crip spacetime, making room within it for what may be understood as trauma spacetime. Like Price, I am pulled to "crip" as a term of resistance. As a "radical form of disability politics," both crip and crip theory challenge regulatory notions of bodymind normativity, while also questioning the construction of the normal/abnormal binary itself.[59] By situating trauma spacetime as a subset, relative of, and/or kind of crip spacetime, I follow other critical disability / crip theorists in "expand[ing] the possibilities of analysis in disability studies by moving away from more strictly medical, legal, and identity-based definitions of disability as an object of analysis."[60] Like crip spacetime, trauma spacetime illuminates the normative assumptions and regulatory mechanisms placed upon bodyminds. The "violent inequities, affective impacts, and intangible knowledge" that Price notes of crip spacetime—they exist deeply within trauma spacetime as well. Every Parkland survivor-activist inhabits a different experience of trauma spacetime than their peers, teachers, parents, and community members. Perhaps it does not need to be said that they all inhabit a different experience of trauma spacetime than did their classmates who did not survive. Moreover, Black activists were quick to point out the unjust partiality that arises in response to activist movements because of the way our nation does and does not think about the connection between differing experiences of trauma spacetime and racism/white-supremacy culture. Charlene Carruthers responded to a tweet by Oprah that supported the Parkland survivor-activists with such an analysis, noting, "Gosh. This is amazing. And a I'm not being sarcastic. I have to be honest and say that I'm a bit taken aback (and a bit hurt) that those of us who were in the streets in the past five years for Black lives didn't receive this type of reception or public support."[61] González too makes their particular experience as a young person of color known, but not by simply talking about trauma spacetime. González's narrative-performance brings their audience into their trauma spacetime and doesn't let go.

When González begins their performance, they immediately mark time by tapping the podium twice, setting their timer, then looking out beyond the audience with a wince that reads *I don't have time for your welcoming cheers or chants*. When they speak, they begin with the concept of time. These words and actions come together to bring their audience into their experience of trauma spacetime: "Six minutes and about twenty seconds," they say. "In a little over six minutes, seventeen of our friends were taken from us. Fifteen were injured." This introduction emphasizes the significance of trauma's spacetime and how much can happen within it. As González begins to pull us into their trauma spacetime, they share memories, feelings, images, and intensities that may or may not have adequate words to describe them—terms like nerve-ridden, fear, anger, and confusion. Yet, González continues to speak with calmness and urgency simultaneously. In doing so, they show how much normative time haunts those of us who are traumatized and how we must learn to navigate time in new, crip ways—all of which González returns to momentarily.[62]

González's voice starts low, but they pick up inflection as they continue. "And everyone," they say, "absolutely *everyone* in the Douglas community was forever altered." In this statement, with these words, González shifts and speaks to the second attribute of trauma within their speech. This attribute is ontological in nature and focuses on the immediate change in subjectivity for members of the Parkland community. As brief as González's statement is, its importance cannot be understated. Trauma has changed, is changing, and may continue to change their very being, the very being of their

classmates, their teachers, and the adults around them. For González, trauma alters *everyone* in the community—not just the people at the school, the parents, or the loved ones, but "everyone" and "forever." Here we see trauma creating a permanent and major alteration in the community. The word "forever" is worthy of note in that González is signifying this change as not only far-reaching and substantial, but also indefinite—not something to be "overcome."

While some may dismiss González's wording as nice turns of phrase or melodramatic political pleas, a closer analysis of their narrative-performance indicates that they are explicitly commenting on how trauma alters our very being *through* our ways of knowing. In their next statement, González continues explaining that the ontological shift brought on by trauma, this permanent change in their community, is directly related to the kind of knowledges they now hold. González explains, "Everyone who was there understands." With more forcefulness in their voice, they broaden the scope of who is included in the community of knowers they are rhetorically creating: "Everyone who has been touched by the cold grip of gun violence understands." With these words, González presents the third attribute of trauma for our consideration. They are establishing an epistemology of trauma, or more accurately, what Robert McRuer and Merri Lisa Johnson have termed a "cripistemology," of trauma.[63] According to McRuer and Johnson, the term "cripistemology" draws attention to the politics of knowledge production by centering what we—as disabled people—know, how we know it, and why it matters.[64] Further developed in a coedited, two-part journal series, cripistemology merges the reclaimed word "crip" with epistemology in order to challenge the prominence of non-disabled ways of knowing through what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson conceptualizes as "sitpoint theory."[65] With this, Johnson and McRuer push theorists not to resolve the assumed crisis between "identity-based or embodiment-based knowledge" and "poststructuralism, pleasure, or the slipperiness of meanings, texts, and bodies."[66] Rather, they invoke cripistemology as a purposeful, conflicting theoretical trajectory—one that aligns with the instability of (dis)ability itself—and ask theorists to "proceed without fearing conceptual instability."[67]

While Johnson and McRuer do not use the language of trauma directly in these essays, they notably "[bind] cripistemology to *crisis"*— a word that often circulates around, in place of, or instead of trauma.[68] Johnson and McRuer explain that it is "in the interest of touching upon ways of being together that might be sustaining through crises" that they pulled together the editions on cripistemology in the first place.[69] Put another way, these two-part explorations into crip ways of knowing are connected to crisis with the intention of improving ways to move through it collectively.[70] The cripistemologies of trauma I see within González's narrative-performance are just that—knowledges that may sustain us through crisis—if we come to see them as such. Further outlining their cripistemology of trauma, González goes on to explain that what they all understand is a kind of *not understanding*:

> For us, long, tearful chaotic hours in the scorching afternoon sun were spent not knowing. No one understood the extent of what happened. No one could believe there were bodies in that building waiting to be identified for over a day. No one knew that the people who were missing had stopped breathing long before anyone of us had even known that a code red had been called. No could comprehend the devastating aftermath, or how far this would reach, or where this would go.

As Jack Halberstam explains in the virtual roundtable on cripistemologies, "any cripistemology worth its name should identify modes of not knowing, unknowing, and failure to know."[71] In the lines above, González does just that. These knowledges that trauma brought are ones of not knowing, unknowing, and failure to know. They are also knowledges that bind us together in/with unknowability. In the next line González says, "For those who still can't comprehend, because they refuse to, I'll tell you where it went. Right into the ground. Six feet deep." Here González creates a political in-group/out-group between those who understand the embodied knowledges of trauma's unknowability, and those who don't understand the knowledges of trauma "because they refuse" to know. This refusal to know is a particular kind of epistemic injustice that Gaile Pohlhaus calls "willful hermeneutical ignorance."[72] As a kind of epistemology of ignorance, Pohlhaus frames willful hermeneutical ignorance as a nuanced dismissal and refusal of a marginalized person's situated knowledge.[73] González and the other survivor-activists struggle to get mainstream America to (ac)know(ledge) their truths about the trauma of gun violence because, as Pohlhaus explains, for those exhibiting willful hermeneutic ignorance to do so would be to give up epistemic privilege and "investigate parts of the world in light of others' concern."[74] In other words, when those with social privileges are invested in keeping their privileges they can "maintain their ignorance by refusing to recognize" and by working to undermine any source of new knowledge presented by the marginalized voices.[75] This refusal to recognize marginalized knowledges, such as Gonzàlez's narrative- performance, is not an inability, but "rather a willful act" of injustice.[76]

Undeterred by these willful acts of refusal, González details a cripistemology of trauma as a paradoxical knowledge where "everyone understands" and "no one understood," simultaneously. Trauma is a knowledge that "no one could comprehend" and yet "[they'll] tell you" about it right now. Through this performative speech act González is not just calling on the Parkland community, they are creating a new community —interpellating, hailing in, all those who "have been touched by the cold grip of gun violence." What's more, they are calling in audience members to witness their trauma —perhaps to be rhetorically traumatized along with them. They are not presuming a given community, but rather building a new, expansive one, where anyone who can acknowledge the paradoxical truths of trauma that they are presenting is welcome. Some audience members can; some cannot. Some become "knowers" through witnessing their trauma and being with them in the unknowability; others still "refuse to know." González is refusing to simplify the cripistemology of trauma. They are demanding the recognition of trauma with its complexities and its paradoxes; witnessing and refusal; isolation and community. As González presents it, trauma is something you can talk about, but as their next lines show, trauma is also where words fail.

At this moment in their narrative-performance González circles back to the first attribute of trauma, spacetime: "Six minutes and twenty seconds with an AR-15, and my friend Carmon will never complain to me about piano practice . . . " They begin crying:

> Aaron Feis will never call Keira Miss Sunshine.
> Alex Schachter will never walk into school with his brother Ryan.
> Scott Beigel will never joke around with Cameron at camp.
> Helena Ramsey will never hang around after school with Max.
> Gina Montalto would never wave to her friend Liam at lunch.
> Joaquan Oliver would never play basketball with Sam or Dylan.

Their words create images, scenes, even snapshots from the lives of their deceased classmates—only so they can remind us, as their trauma reminds them, that these moments will never happen again. Rhetorically, we're taken to the basketball court, camp, piano practice, and the lunchroom. These moments are indices within González's experience of trauma spacetime. These moments signify an unspoken, untraumatized "good life" that haunts them—something that once was and will never be again. González's voice speeds up as they continue.[77] There is a melancholy force behind each spoken name—a force, a particular kind of anger that ricochets between heavy-hearted agony and righteous indignation. They gasp for air between words and tears. Their trauma spacetime expands and contracts; they are both on stage and deep in memory at the same time. Those of us familiar with moving through trauma spacetime know this experience all too well. González continues, but now after each name, the sentence stays unfinished.

Aliana Petty would never...
Cara Luggin would never...
Chris Hixon would never...
Luke Hoyer would never...
Martin Duque Anquiano would never...
Peter Wang would never...
Alyssa Alhadeff would never...
Jamie Guttenberg would never...
Meadow Pollack would never...

Their voice gets higher and speeds up as they go along, almost as if they are overwhelmed. Some might wonder if they're on the verge of a panic attack. They aren't.. Or maybe they are. Who can know really? They live with the embodied affect of trauma within their bodymind. When they say the final name, their pace slows down and their tone drops slightly. While their agony is undeniable, González is not only publicly mourning their classmates. Their poignant memories, their lingering sentences, and the changing pace and tone of their voice, all come together to rhetorically suspend the lives of their classmates within the fluidity and complexity of trauma spacetime. Soon they will suspend their audience within their trauma spacetime too.

After naming their deceased classmates, González stops speaking entirely. They stand at the podium, for over four minutes, in complete silence.

González stares straight ahead, looking outward once more, beyond the audience. Their tears are gone, and their face is stern and stoic. We can hear them breathing again. Ellen Samuels writes that crip time "requires us to break in our bodies and minds to new rhythms, new patterns of thinking and feeling and moving through the world."[78] Trauma spacetime requires the same of us. With this silence, González does not ask—they require—their audience to sit with new rhythms and new patterns of thinking about trauma. Through silence, González demands that the audience attend to the trauma spacetime that they live within. Indeed, they bring the audience into it with them. The audience cannot handle it. Within seconds a man in the audience yells, "Go Emma!" Then others follow suit, chatting and clapping. After 30 more seconds of silence, audience members yell, "Go EMMA!" and "You can do it!" Two minutes pass then in unison they chant, "Never again! Never again! Never again!" González's eyes are closed now, almost as though they are trying to hide from the crowd. After a while the crowd

seems to realize this and stops chanting. The crowd is silent for just a moment, before someone says, "We're all with you Emma. We all love you."

Although present throughout their speech, González's embodied affect of trauma truly comes forward during these tense moments of silence. It is during these moments that the crowd does not know how to be with González's narrative-performance, and it is in this silence that they fall outside of social legibility (even if temporarily). The crowd insists González be a motivational speaker. As an audience, they seem to want or even need a call and response. Audiences demand a particular kind of trauma narrative, trauma performance, wherein trauma is presented as a devastating chaos that is ultimately overcome. González does not give their audience a narrative of overcoming or a narrative with a positive resolution. González gives the audience 6 minutes and 20 seconds of horror, devastation, chaos, and unknowing. González gives the audience something they do not know what to do with— silence, and trauma. Outside of the slight smile when showing their combat boots, González makes no effort to "connect" with the crowd. They do not joke, try to inspire, give a heartwarming plea, or ever smile again. They never talk of "overcoming" or "coming together," even politically. They are exasperated, heartbroken. They are mournful and indignant. They *are* sad—we can see their tears—but they do not tell you that. They do not use these words, but rather show you their anger at the community, country, and systems that failed them and their classmates. They end their narrative-performance with a snarky, almost annoyed look, telling their audience to "fight for your lives before it's someone else's job." In a tone ringing with near-resentment, González exclaims that if you don't join the fight against gun violence, it's *your* life that could be taken and then the burden will fall onto someone else. González's choses the word "job," indicating that they do not see this organizing as their "life's passion" or their "meaning of life," but rather, as work—a "job"—something we have to have, but not something we love. Their trauma affect continues even after they finish speaking, as they walk off stage before the applause can be received. With González gone so quickly the camera focuses on a crying young white girl surrounded by the wider audience cheering wildly as though it were a rock concert. The camera turns again to show González sternly walking away. It's as if they have no interest, space, or time for the audience reception; the audience keeps cheering anyway.

I risk the vulnerability of naming my own traumas publicly, purposefully to break the unspoken code in academia wherein we pretend not to be fully human. In doing so, I also risk the performative wherein, despite the qualifiers, my narratives of trauma are read as authenticating me into a wounded subjecthood. This argument, a part of Yasmin Nair's well-circulated critique of trauma narrative[79] *is sharp. It is sharp partly in that it astutely penetrates the ways that trauma narratives are usurped by neoliberalism for its own gain, and partly in that it cuts deep—it cuts out the potential for the cripistemologies of trauma, for disability justice as building blocks for collective and social transformation. I know that my attempts to resist the "poster child" and the inspirational story have meant that I've been interpellated into this ideal subject for neoliberalism. I have played these games for access to resources so that I could find a livable life in a bodymind rife with pain and suffering. I am not alone. I know that when I speak of my trauma knowledges, I further risk someone concluding that I am relying on a "wounded identity." (People have.) As though my claims for social justice could not stand on their own. (They do.) As though I would not be making them if I did not live with these traumas in my bodymind. (I would.) And still, my claims for social justice come not despite my disabling traumas but through them, and with them fully. And to deny that would be to deny my own*

humanity. I agree completely with Nair that social justice movements and claims for social transformation should not and cannot need trauma to authenticate them. I also thinkfeel deeply in the power of opening up the concept of trauma and its cripistemologies, because in doing so we move closer toward disability justice. We move toward new ways of being and knowing with one another that do not rely on "woundedness or injury" but rather on what disability activists have been telling us for so long about interdependence, wholeness, sustainability, accessibility, and anti-capitalist politics.[80]

Part Three: Toward A Political/Relational Model of Trauma

González's speech is so powerful, in part, because it takes trauma out of the medical/clinical domain—outside of ways of viewing disability (and trauma) as an individual problem that needs to be overcome. For decades, the social model of disability has been the predominant theoretical approach to disability outside of the medical model and the medical industrial complex. Indeed, through its attention to inequalities within built environments and culturally-constructed rubrics for meaning making, the social model of disability has created pathways for significant political and cultural advances for disabled people. However, this model is not without its limitations and critique emerged early on. [81] Among some of these limitations are the disputed binary created between "disability" and "impairment," and an inattentiveness to chronic pain and illness. In *Feminist Queer Crip*, Alison Kafer extends new life into this longstanding discussion regarding the social model of disability. Kafer addresses these concerns through the political/relational model of disability and in doing so presents a critical approach to *both* the medical model *and* the social model of disability. Rather than defining disability, Kafer positions disability as "contested and contestable," analyzing instead the creation of the category as it intersects with other markers of social difference.[82] It is this embeddedness with vectors of power and oppression that concerns Kafer. Her "direct refusal of the widespread depoliticization of disability" reclaims disability as a sociopolitical site for activist responses and "collective reimagining."[83] I argue that in their narrative-performance, González is doing the same with trauma. Using Kafer's political/relational model of disability as a framework, I outline below the beginning tenets of a political/relational model of trauma. A political/relational model of trauma further extrapolates trauma from its dominant definitions so that it might become a site for collective reimagining. As its name suggests, a political/relational model of trauma also allows for expansive engagement/critique with the sociocultural, political, and relational aspects of trauma, including the pain and anguish that comes with trauma.

A Political/Relational Model of Trauma:

1. Trauma is socially constructed, even as it is held deep within our bodyminds. Here, I extend the CTS critique that trauma is not inherent to a catastrophic event but is determined by social consensus that the event was, in fact, traumatizing.[84] This collective decision-making is inevitably (bio)politicized and shaped by social systems of power/oppression. Furthermore, I argue that trauma remains socially constructed

even after it becomes held in our bodymind. What counts as trauma within the bodymind, when, by whom, in what ways, is also all determined by place, time, and culture. As with all disabilities, this too is highly (bio)politicized and shaped by social systems of power/oppression. Moreover, sociopolitical factors mediate access to competent trauma support, care, and resources.[85]

González's narrative/performance itself may not show this directly, however the broader political discourse surrounding the Parkland survivor-activists absolutely does. The immediate and extraordinary praise the Parkland survivor-activists received for their organizing brought forward important critique surrounding questions of race and class, particularly in comparison to the organizing work of youth connected to Black Lives Matter.[86] The trauma of the mostly white, affluent Parkland youth is quickly recognized and rewarded, whereas the traumas of Black youth and other youth of color are routinely dismissed, ignored, or disregarded. To their credit, Parkland survivor-activists heard these critiques and dug deeper, reaching out to form coalitions across difference and further re(educate) themselves.[87] This coalitional work is evident in that well over half of the speakers at the DC rally, including González, were Black, Indigenous, and/or other people of color.[88] It's also worth noting that as early as the day of shooting itself, right-wing pundits and conspiracy theorists described the Parkland survivor-activists as "crisis actors," outright denying the students their trauma.[89] Not only does this quick dismissal allow for circumventing any discussion of gun violence, it also brings us back to Pohlhaus's "willful hermeneutical ignorance," allowing for refusal of a sociopolitical inconvenience.

2. The so-called "problem" of trauma cannot be solved through individualized medical/clinical intervention but must be addressed through broader social transformations. This is because the "problem" of trauma does not originate in the bodyminds of the individuals or populations who live with trauma, but rather in the social structures that unequally distribute life chances and resources toward a livable life. Trauma is more likely to reach those who are marginalized. The white supremacist, ableist, capitalist, and neocolonialist heterocispatriarchy traumatizes. Just as disability activists and scholars have long argued about disability, I am arguing about trauma: if we want to better the lives of traumatized people, we need to focus our efforts on changing the social structures and cultural ideologies surrounding trauma *and* its healing processes.

González's ending line, "Fight for your lives before it's someone else's job," urges us toward social change. The conclusion to their silence—this response to their experiences with trauma's attributes of instability—is not overcoming, recovery, and/or a call for healing. González calls for political action. The March for Our Lives organization founded by the Parkland survivor-activists continues this work in a number of ways. Most memorably are the infamous "price tags," which put a literal price on each student based on the amount of money the politicians in that state accept from the National Rifle Association.[90] With this and other tactics, including get-out-the-vote efforts, the March for Our Lives organization works to "harness the power of young people across the country to fight for sensible gun violence prevention policies that save lives."[91] As their website exclaims, they are a one hundred percent youth-led "fight against all forms of gun violence" and are not "afraid to call B.S."[92]

Let me be very clear: seeking support, care, and resources—including medical/clinical

services should not be shamed, dismissed, or rejected. Those of us who live with trauma in our bodyminds need access to care and the fault lines and slippages between care and cure are intricate and tortuous.[93] It is with profound gratitude that I credit disability activists, particularly disabled queer women of color, who have taught me to own care work *as* political work.[94] Just as Kafer "recognizes the possibility of simultaneously desiring to be cured of chronic pain and to be identified and allied with disabled people," I, too, recognize the fundamental need to lessen the chronic anguish of the physical and psychological pain that comes with trauma.[95] However, when this individualized focus becomes the *only* mode of understanding trauma, we significantly limit our understanding of trauma and its impacts. This care work can and must go on while we simultaneously prioritize the fight for broader systemic change against traumatizing systems of violence.[96]

3. Trauma is political. Trauma has been so deeply tethered to the medical/clinical and individualized model of disability that its political nature has been obscured. We must re-politicize trauma in every facet possible. I contend, building on Kafer's political/relational model, that we need an "increased recognition for the political nature of a medical framing" of trauma in addition to a re-politicization of trauma writ large.[97] We must address tough questions regarding access to affordable, trauma-competent care and the politics of resources and life chances. Whose trauma will be considered worthy? Whose will be recognized? Whose will be dismissed? Whose bodyminds will carry intergenerational trauma and whose will not? Who will have life chances that mean they are less likely to experience sociocultural traumas like war, gun violence, sexual assault, domestic violence, hate crimes, and/or police violence? Who will not?

The entirety of González's narrative-performance—indeed, the entire purpose of the eight hundred March for Our Lives rallies that day—is to resituate trauma as political. González and the Parkland survivor-activists demand that their trauma be deemed worthy—worth more than just empty political rhetoric. In addition to the line about fighting for your lives, González's narrative-performance emphasizes the political when they directly state, "For those who still can't comprehend, because they refuse to, I'll tell you where it went. Right into the ground. Six feet deep." In the literal sense the "it," seemingly refers to their classmates. "It" is actually a floating signifier and as such may refer to any number of things González is articulating that this mass shooting took from them: who they once were as a community; the afternoon sunshine (now turned into "long, tearful, chaotic hours"); belief in a rescue / identification system; or the ability to comprehend their own experiences. The ferocity of their words, "six feet deep," is followed shortly thereafter by a wrathful naming of the type of gun the shooter used, an AK-15. For González this is not informational, it's political.

What's more, González extends the demand for recognition to include anyone who lives with trauma related to gun violence. They exclaim that "everyone who has been touched by the cold grip of gun violence understands," creating what Joan W. Scott calls a "collective affinity." As Scott describes them, collective affinities are "play[ing] on identifications that have been attributed to individuals by their societies, and that have served to exclude them or subordinate them."[98] Here, González's narrative-performance draws upon the potentiality of trauma as a site for coalition building across differences. Trauma as collective affinity may include people who have experienced various kinds of gun violences, sexual violences, domestic or physical violences; people who live with

intergenerational and multigenerational traumas; people living with daily traumas of systemic oppressions; people who have experienced catastrophic accidents; veterans, civilians, and refugees of war; immigrants and asylums seekers; institutionalized and incarcerated peoples; unhoused people; people who have lived through climate disasters; and many others.

4. Finally, and relatedly, we must think of trauma in relational terms. Trauma does not happen in isolation. Trauma connects us. Trauma-inducing events happen to inter-connected populations as well as to individuals, and any caring and critical engagement with trauma itself requires that we relate, witness, acknowledge, and hold space for and with one another. Furthermore, the traumatized bodymind can only be known through its co-constitutive relationship to the normalized, untraumatized bodymind. Another way to say this is that trauma reminds us of our deep interconnectedness, our interdependence.

González's narrative-performance is overflowing with the understanding of trauma's relationality: by naming every single person who was taken from the Parkland community, and by naming the things they (un)(not)knows they will never do again. They also present the traumatized bodymind as co-constitutive with the untraumatized bodymind, when they talk about "everyone who was there" as (un)(not)knowing together and in relation to "those who still can't comprehend," who were presumably not there. Here they are defining trauma against the non-traumatized or those who have not experienced gun violence and therefore cannot fully understand. Lastly, as previously noted, González's speech acts as a calling-in of those who have experienced gun violence, interpellating a kind of trauma-bound community. In doing so, they situate trauma as relational and communal, resisting the medical model of disability that proclaims trauma to be an individual issue for individual concern. This move, of course, is cyclical—ushering trauma back into the political and allowing González to argue for collective action toward broader social transformation.

I think I've watched and rewatched X's speech four times now. I've stopped crying. I routinely tell people I go to more therapy than God. I have spent the greater part of the last decade searching for anything, something, anything, that would ease the physical pain, anguish, and fatigue I live with daily in my bodymind. I've tried all things on the disabled person bingo card.[99] *Some help for a while; most don't. X's last words ring in my ears "fight for your lives . . . fight for your lives . . . fight for your lives . . . " I feelthink I am doing that every day. People say, "man I wish I could take a nap every afternoon!" I wish I didn't have to nap! Fighting for my life sometimes means "fighting" these moments of "well-meaning," ableist microaggression. It often means "fighting" my own internalized ableism. I rarely go to rallies, in-person, to hear the Xs of the world speak anymore. I rarely "take to the streets!" My disabled bodymind has taught that traditional forms of activism do not work for me. Disability and crip communities have taught me creativity and that this does not mean I am not a valuable activist.*[100] *I can care for my disabled bodymind, I can care for myself and provide care for others, and I can also engage in deep political social change. Indeed, there is no distinction.*

Notes

1. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2004), 4. ↩

2. Barack Obama, "Cameron Kasky, Jaclyn Corin, David Hogg, Emma González and Alex Wind," *TIME*, April 19, 2018, time.com/collection-post/5217568/parkland-students. In May 2021, González clarified their pronouns and announced that they are now going by "X González." Please note that some of the sources referenced in this article do not reflect this information. Chris Perkins, "'Call Me X:' Survivor of Parkland shooting has picked out a new name," *SunSentinal*, May 11, 2021, https://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-ne-emma-gonzalez-now-x-gonzalez-20210511-knb4ao4qorczlcczvor5us2jdi-story.html < https://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-ne-emma-gonzalez-now-x-gonzalez-20210511-knb4ao4qorczlcczvor5us2jdi-story.html> . ↩

3. Obama, "Cameron Kasky." ↩

4. Dave Cullens, "Will the Parkland Kids Change the Gun Debate?," *POLITICO*, February 20, 2018, politi.co/2EHHndy < https://doi.org/politi.co/2EHHndy> . ↩

5. Molly Roberts, "Why the Parkland Kids Might Be Different," *Washington Post*, February 20, 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2018/02/21/why-the-parkland-kids-might-be-different < http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2018/02/21/why-the-parkland-kids-might-be-different/.> . ↩

6. Michelle Cottle, "How Parkland Students Changed the Gun Debate," *The Atlantic*, February 28, 2018, http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/parkland-students-power/554399 < http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/parkland-students-power/554399/> . ↩

7. Cottle, "How Parkland Students"; see also Obama, "Cameron Kasky." ↩

8. Michelle Cottle, "How Parkland Students." ↩

9. My grounding in CDS is indebted to scholars such as Julie Avril Minich, who writes that disability studies "involves scrutinizing not bodily or mental impairments but the social norms that define particular attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attributes in particular populations." Julie Avril Minich, "Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now," Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities, *Lateral* 5, no. 1 (2016), https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.9 < https://doi.org/10.25158/L5.1.9> . ↩

10. X González, "Emma González's powerful March for our Lives speech in full," *Guardian News YOUTUBE,* March 24, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u46HzTGVQhg. < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u46HzTGVQhg> ↩

11. I use the term "bodymind" following many of my mentors in disability studies and disability communities who refuse the pervasiveness of the Cartesian split and use the term to signify the inextricability of cognitive processes from those of the material body. See Margaret Price, "The Bodymind Program and the Possibilities of Pain," *Hypatia,* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 268-84, https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12127 < https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12127> . ↩

12. Alison Kafer, *Feminist Queer Crip* (Indiana University Press, 2013). ↩

13. I make this invocation to draw direct attention to the all too often deadly intersections between race and disability. See https://www.blackdisabledandproud.org/black-lives-matter.html < https://www.blackdisabledandproud.org/black-lives-matter.html> for further readings and resources. ↩

14. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 91. ↩

15. To be clear, this call for a conceptual "rescuing" of trauma theory includes further addressing the inextricable ways in which whiteness and racialization are embedded within the hegemonic understandings of trauma and healing that have shaped our nation. See, for example, Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations* (Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 2014), and Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas: Central Recovery Press, 2017). ↩

16. Laura S. Brown, "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma," *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 100–12. ↩

17. Brown, "Not Outside," 100. Feminist activist-scholars quickly rejected this definition in that "the range of human experience" was so narrowly, and hegemonically, defined. Furthermore, it by definition positioned anyone who experienced trauma as outside the range of the human. ↩

18. I understand the diagnosis of PTSD as nothing more than an institutionalized, and thus highly politicized, rubric that attempts to capture both the phenomena of trauma and its correlating affect/effect. Because there are numerous experiences and embodiments of trauma that fall outside of the parameters of this rubric, I do not see trauma and PTSD as synonymous. Rather PTSD is used to signify a certain kind of social, political, and medical recognition that is granted to some and denied to others. ↩

19. Monica J. Casper and Eric Wertheimer, "Within Trauma: An Introduction," *Critical Trauma Studies: Understanding Violence, Conflict and Memory in Everyday Life*, ed. Monica J. Casper and Eric Wertheimer (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 2. ↩

20. Casper and Wertheimer, "Within Trauma: An Introduction," 10. ↩

21. Sami Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)Ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018) 6. ↩

22. Maurice E. Stevens, "Trauma is as Trauma Does: The Politics of Affect in Catastrophic Times," *Critical Trauma Studies: Understanding Violence, Conflict, and Memory in Everyday Life*, eds. Monica J. Casper and Eric Wertheimer (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 20. ↩

23. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2003), 20. ↩

24. Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 17. Also Jina B. Kim, "Toward a Crip-of-Color Critique: Thinking With Minich's 'Enabling Whom," Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities < https://csalateral.org/archive/forum/alt-humanities-forum/> , *Lateral* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2017) < https://csalateral.org/archive/issue/6-1/> , https://doi.org/10.25158/L6.1.14 < https://doi.org/10.25158/L6.1.14> . ↩

25. Daniel R. Morrison, and Monica J. Casper. "Intersections of Disability Studies and Critical Trauma Studies: A Provocation." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2012), doi:10.18061/dsq.v32i2.3189 < https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3189> . ↩

26. James Berger, "Trauma Without Disability, Disability Without Trauma: A Disciplinary Divide," *JAC* 24, no. 3 (2004): 563. ↩

27. Morrison and Casper, "Intersections of Disability Studies and Critical Trauma Studies." ↩

28. James Berger, "Trauma Without Disability," 564–566. ↩

29. Douglas C. Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in *The Disability Studies Reader,* ed. Lennard J. Davis, 5th ed. (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2016), 33. ↩

30. Berger, "Trauma Without Disability," 571. ↩

31. Berger, "Trauma Without Disability," 571. ↩

32. According to the US Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime, disabled people are more than twice as likely to experience violent crime than non-disabled people. We also know that so often violence goes unreported. See, for example, "Crimes Against People with Disabilities," National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide: Crime and Victimization Fact Sheets, *National Center for Victims of Crime,* 2018, https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/ncvrw2018/info_flyers/fact_sheets/2018NCVRW_VictimsWithDisabilities_508_QC.pdf < https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files

/xyckuh226/files/ncvrw2018/info_flyers/fact_sheets/2018NCVRW_VictimsWithDisabilities_508_QC.pdf> . ↩

33. "Crimes Against People with Disabilities." ↩

34. See, bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1994). ↩

35. I understand trauma as debilitating and dis-abling. The affects/effects of trauma on the bodymind can impact one's capacity to respond both physically and mentally as necessitated by late capitalism. Relatedly, the ableist structures and ideologies that permeate society can dis-able a traumatized individual or population by not recognizing their experience as valid or real, not providing resources to make life more livable, and/or further marginalizing them as "crazy" or "out of control." ↩

36. I borrow the phrase "uneven distribution of life chances" from queer legal scholar and theorist Dean Spade. See Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics and the Limits of the Law* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). ↩

37. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Mellisa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 1. ↩

38. Many somatic bodyworkers agree with the depths to which trauma lives in the body. See, Peter A Levine, *Trauma and Memory: Brain and Body in a Search for the Living Past: A Practical Guide for Understanding and Working with Traumatic Memory* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2015). ↩

39. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 10. ↩

40. See, for example, the work of Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1995). ↩

41. In *Cruel Optimism,* Berlant theorizes "the good life" as "the political and affective economies of normativity" through "the fantasy of meritocracy, a fantasy of being deserving, and its relation to practices of intimacy, at home, at work, and in consumer worlds." It is "the production as desire of a collective will to imagine oneself as a solitary agent who can and must live the good life as promised by capitalist culture." Berlant, *Cruel Optimism,* 167. ↩

42. Women of Color, Black Feminists, Colonized Peoples, Indigenous Peoples, and Jewish People have been making this claim for a long time. For example, see, Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), and Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Injury and Healing* (Portland: Joy Degruy Publications Inc., 2017). For scientific studies that show epigenetic evidence, see the work of Rachel Yehuda, Professor of Psychiatry and Neuroscience and Director of the Center for Psychedelic Psychotherapy and Trauma Research at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, https://plu.mx/mtsinai/u/ryehuda. ↩

43. Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 35. ↩

44. With this, it can be helpful to consider crip theory as always queer, but queer theory as not always crip (in the same way that a square is always a rectangle, but a rectangle is not always a square). ↩

45. McRuer, *Crip Theory*, 23. ↩

46. McRuer, *Crip Theory*, 10. ↩

47. McRuer, *Crip Theory*, 2. ↩

48. This extension of McRuer/Butler is not merely intellectual. Trauma's instabilities can feel deeply troubling within the bodymind and can lead to various kinds of "trouble" in an

ableist/sanist world that refuses to recognize or care for trauma, as such. ↩

49. I am not interested in a romanticization of trauma or any of its attributes. The experiences and impacts of trauma can be horrifying. This includes its survival and what many now call "post-traumatic growth." Trauma is terrifying; it might also be illuminating and paradigm shifting. I am calling for an understanding of trauma in its full complexity. ↩

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51. Times Staff, "Six of the most powerful young speakers at March for Our Lives," *LATimes.com*, March 24, 2018, https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-march-speeches-20180324-story.html. < https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-march-speeches-20180324-story.html.> ↩

52. Louis Lucero II, "What Emma González Said Without Words at the March for Lives Rally," *The New York Times*, March 24, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/24/us/emma-gonzalez-march-for-our-lives.html < https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/24/us/emma-gonzalez-march-for-our-lives.html> . ↩

53. Ed Morales, "Emma González: La nueva cara of Florida Latinx," *Washington Post,* March 1, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/03/01/emma-gonzalez-la-nueva-cara-of-florida-latinx/ < https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/03/01/emma-gonzalez-la-nueva-cara-of-florida-latinx/> . ↩

54. Take for instance the Iowa Republican Representative, Steve King, who criticized González for wearing a patch of the Cuban flag. See Maegan Vazquez, "Steve King's Campaign Criticizes Parkland Survivor Emma Gonzalez," *CNN*, March 27, 2018, https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/26/politics/steve-king-facebook-post-emma-gonzalez/index.html < https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/26/politics/steve-king-facebook-post-emma-gonzalez/index.html> . ↩

55. At first, the media expects and even thrives on fetishizing "chaos" in personal narrative immediately after a catastrophic event. However, with time, these narratives are expected to shift into the conventional standard with a coherent beginning, middle, end; expected or debatable "plot" and resolution; character/personal development; and social justice, social good, and/or political implications. See, Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). ↩

56. Margaret Price, "Moving Together: Toward a Theory of Crip Spacetime" (keynote lecture, Critical Disability Studies Collective Symposium, *Imagining Cultures of Access: Race, Disability and Mental Health on Campus*, University of Minnesota—Twin Cities, 2017), 10. See also Margaret Price, *Crip Spacetime: A Re-orientation to Disability Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, Forthcoming). ↩

57. Price, "Moving Together," 10. ↩

58. Price, "Moving Together," 10. ↩

59. Price, "Moving Together," 3. ↩

60. Sami Schalk, "Critical Disability Studies as Methodology," Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities, *Lateral* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2017), https://doi.org/10.25158/L6.1.13 < https://doi.org/10.25158/L6.1.13> . ↩

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64. Johnson and McRuer, "Cripistemologies," 128–130. ↩

65. Garland-Thomson discusses "sitpoint theory" in reference to Nancy Mair's writing in *Waist High in the World* (1996). Quoted in Johnson and McRuer, "Cripistemologies," 134. ↩

66. Johnson and McRuer, "Cripistemologies," 132. ↩

67. Johnson and McRuer, "Cripistemologies," 132. ↩

68. Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer, "Introduction: Cripistemologies and the Masturbating Girl," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studie*s, 8, no. 3 (2014): 254. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/558366/pdf < https://muse.jhu.edu/article/558366/pdf> . ↩

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96. Here I am again thinking specifically of my disabled activist ancestors and the activist-artist-organizers who are currently influencing, and guiding, my own understanding of disability justice organizing. This includes, but is not limited to:Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Alice Wong, Patty Berne, Eli Clare, Stacey Park Milbern, Mia Mingus and Corbett O'Toole. ↩

97. Kafer, *Feminist Queer Crip*, 6–8. ↩

98. Scott as quoted in Alison Kafer, *Feminist Queer Crip*, 11. ↩

99. A quick Google search for "Chronic Illness Bingo" or "Spoonie Bingo" will bring up many examples, like https://myheartsisters.org/2014/11/23/chronic-illness-bingo/ < https://myheartsisters.org/2014/11/23/chronic-illness-bingo/> . Relatedly, also search "Ableism Bingo." ↩

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As a Ronald E. McNair scholar, Angela M. Carter became the first person in her family to graduate from college when she earned a BA in English, with honors, from Truman State University in 2009. In 2015, Angela earned a Master's Degree from the University of Minnesota in Feminist Studies. In 2019, she completed her PhD in Feminist Studies from the University of Minnesota (UMN). Broadly speaking, Angela's academic interests include: trauma studies, critical disability studies, social justice pedagogies, feminist epistemology, and queer/crip theory. Angela's work at the intersections of trauma and disability has previously appeared in *Disability Studies Quarterly*. She also co-authored a chapter on navigating structural ableism in graduate school which appears in the anthology *Negotiating Disability: Disclosure and Higher Education*, published in 2017 by the University of Michigan Press. Since completing her PhD, Angela has worked as an Access Consultant at the Disability Resource Center at UMN. She has also continued in her role as a co-founding member of the UMN Critical Disability Studies Collective, an organization working to foster an academic community around critical disability studies throughout the Minnesota university system.

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Solidarity in Falling Apart: Toward a Crip, Collectivist, and Justice-Seeking Theory of Feminine Fracture

by Alyson K. Spurgas | Cripistemologies of Crisis: Emergent Knowledges for the Present, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT In this essay, I reconceptualize feminized trauma by utilizing a queer crip feminist disability justice framework. This reconceptualizing allows for an intervention in both historical psychoanalytic and contemporary biomedical framings of the experience of gendered and sexual violence, pursuant or sequelic trauma, and associated symptoms. Both historical and contemporary psycho-logics too often imagine gendered and sexual violence as abnormal or exceptional events (e.g., "stranger rape") which can be treated and cured individually, thus delimiting them within a white, wealthy or middle-class, cis- and hetero-feminine register. As a corrective, within the framework of everyday emergencies, insidious traumas, and cripistemologies of crisis, I position feminine fracturing and falling apart as chronic, and consider abolitionist strategies for survival, care, and solidarity beyond traditional medical frameworks for recovery. This further provides a way to understand dissociation or rather dissociative-adjacent symptomology as real, legitimate, and painful, yet also as sociopolitical products experienced differently across diverse populations—and as mundane, banal, and even expected for some. Here, feminine fracturing is symptom, method, and potential avenue for change or liberation. What does "recovery" look like when feminized trauma is endemic to the point of being so normalized and unexceptional as to be a thoroughly unremarkable part of our everyday cultural backdrop? How is this exacerbated when we examine the experiences of trans women, poor women, and immigrant and BIPOC women and femmes? I posit that there is promise in embracing a fracturing, in falling apart—as antidote to the normative and neoliberal logic of keeping it together.

KEYWORDS biopolitics, care, femininity, PTSD, trauma

In 1992, psychiatrist Judith Herman published *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. In this important intervention, Herman argued that the trauma that results from domestic violence and sexual assault, as part of patriarchal aggression, constitutes a type of political violence or even gendered terrorism. As it also tends to be quite commonplace yet simultaneously hidden from view (and thus complicated and insidious in its effects), Herman made the case that the traumatic symptomology that follows from domestic violence and sexual assault must be reconceptualized—thus heralding the shift from post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD (which had up to that point been reserved primarily for the "shell shock" experienced by soldiers in war), to complex post-traumatic stress disorder, or C-PTSD. C-PTSD was to be understood as distinct from PTSD in part because "the syndrome [or spectrum of conditions] that follows upon prolonged, repeated trauma needs its own name."[1] The most important aspects to note about the shift to C-PTSD include the following: 1) sexual trauma is most often gendered and specifically *feminized* as it is disproportionately experienced by women, 2) one of the most notable and common symptoms of this

feminized trauma is *dissociation*, or the splitting of consciousness as a protective mechanism (as it has been since early Freudian formulations of hysteria and other feminine neuroses), and 3) the symptoms of dissociation and other traumatic sequelae may be ordinary, ongoing, and quite literally *complex*. In explicating this shift, Herman brought gendered and sexualized violence into mainstream psychological and therapeutic conversations and illuminated their inherently structural nature. C-PTSD arguably brought thinking on trauma closer to the *chronic*, as well, as it attended to the effects of prolonged exposure to violence. Herman staunchly advocated that the conceptual groundwork of trauma must account for the minutiae of the everyday life of domestic violence victims, which subsequently illuminated how so many forms of gendered trauma are "not outside the range"[2] of normal human experience, and are not exceptional. For Herman, too much of what happens in the home, in the bedroom, and on the street might be seriously dangerous and traumatizing to women, in particular. The personal is political.

One of the most common symptoms of trauma, in Herman's analysis as in others, is the dissociative silence that accompanies it. C-PTSD then still remains within the traditional psychoanalytic trauma theory framework, relegating trauma to that which cannot be narrated, categorically. So, although Herman placed trauma itself squarely within the sociopolitical, she did not question the ontological status of trauma's unspeakability—understood to be the result of a temporal split and the subsequent need for psychic defense due to an experience that was quite literally unthinkable and thus also unsayable. In this essay, I question trauma's fundamental inability to be spoken of or even adequately recounted by survivors. Is trauma unnarratable by nature, or are traumatized people instead just too often part of communities that are either ignored or actively silenced? To this end, I propose that trauma's unnarratability is not fundamental nor ontological, but rather political and structural. And this may be particularly true for the feminized trauma that results from domestic violence, sexual assault, and other gendered—and, importantly here, racialized—aggressions.

As revolutionary as it was at the time, Herman's reframing was also insufficient in attending to the full breadth of trauma responses across experiences of gender and femininity (i.e., cis, trans, nonbinary, agender, genderqueer, etc.), and experiences related to race, class, nation, and citizenship. Dissociation, still centered in Herman's C-PTSD framework, has become the *sine qua non* of trauma and has been treated as necessary for trauma to register as legible and legitimate—but arguably not all trauma survivors experience dissociation, or experience it in the same way. This de facto requirement is also troublesome insofar as the very same folks whose credibility is regularly questioned as it is (i.e., women—especially trans women—of color, first and foremost) are viewed as non-credible if they do not exhibit this symptom. Further, even as dissociative and other traumatic symptomology are conceptualized as ongoing and everyday in Herman's updated C-PTSD model, they are still framed as ills that can be overcome, rehabilitated, and even cured. And recovery here entails being able to reconnect the disconnected parts of the dissociated (and unspeakable) self, often through medicalized and individualized therapeutic modalities. It is because of the inadequacies of this continued framing of trauma as unspeakable, the centering of dissociation as the categorically legitimate response to gendered and sexualized violence (often evacuated of race, class, and nation), and an emphasis on individualized recovery under neoliberalism, that I argue we must reconsider and reformulate notions of feminized trauma. Attending to the range of ways in which violence is meted out and experienced will help us to listen to survivors without presuming their inability to communicate. And this can help promote a new and

politicized understanding of trauma, and pave the way toward more just forms of collective and communal care.

My analysis moves between theoretical and conceptual registers and discussions of various types of data (i.e., historical and contemporary scientific discourse, tweets and other media-based accounts, and autoethnographic narrative) and illustrates the type of *fracturing* or *falling apart* that I describe as a legitimate trauma response. Not fully dissociative, but a little all over the place. Sometimes declarative, sometimes interrogative—at moments "feral."[3] This fractured method suggests the difficulty (but not impossibility) of communicating everyday trauma. It is repetitive, fragmentary, and at times frustrated—a banal collage of dull anger and pain (including anger at the silencing of so many others). Asking questions, I argue, can help open up space for radical intervention and reframing. So when I ask questions, the intervention I propose is, in part, enacted in the asking. This method is not only a form of inquiry and interrogation but also of recognition—the recognition that some things, some very important parts of the story, have been missing and should be heard.

In the remainder of this essay, I argue that even as we have moved toward thinking of gendered and sexual violence and their traumatic aftermaths as political and structural (and as psychologists have gotten better at accounting for these types of violence and their effects), we still too often operate within a reductive logic regarding femininity that is ultimately unjust insofar as legitimate trauma becomes relegated to a certain demographic, and only that type of trauma experience is legible *as suffering*. Further problematic is that, under this prevailing logic, the type of feminine suffering that is most clearly legible is that which follows from violences framed as "exceptional" (as opposed to the suffering of those who are not victims of "stranger rape," incest, or abuse "at home"). Most often, survivors (even under Herman's improved formulation) are imagined to be white and wealthy or middle-class—and their treatment is targeted as such. Given all of this, I argue that we must responsibly ask: What symptoms might we observe if and when we recognize that many traumatized folks do not have recourse to diagnosis, to treatment, and, in some cases, do not even have the time or space to dissociate? (Let alone to recover?)

In response to the historical and contemporary whitewashing, cisheteronormativity, and class reductiveness of psychological frameworks of feminized trauma, I re-theorize the symptomology and sequelae of gendered and sexual violence alongside recent conceptualizations of insidious trauma,[4] crisis ordinariness,[5] debility,[6] chrononormativity,[7] slow violence,[8] and slow death.[9] With an eye toward the liberation of groups whose experiences are often minimized or blatantly ignored, I argue that traumatic symptomology such as dissociation ought to be re-read through the lenses of critical disability studies[10] and, more specifically, crip-of-color[11] and feminist-of-color disability studies[12]—which offer novel ways to consider the imbrication of minds, bodies, and the social. These frames are oriented toward structural critique, and move us beyond traditional formulations of the psychosomatic, bringing us closer to an understanding of the environmental, relational, and often traumatic constitution of bodyminds in the world.[13] Such an orientation is imperative in that it allows for deeper attention to how race, class, citizenship, and other intersecting statuses contour feminized trauma and symptoms across gendered populations.

An increased attention to multivalent structural inequities within recent work coming out of disability studies is exciting and noteworthy. However, disability studies has historically had

its own problems with a reductive and bourgeois whiteness. Thus, Black feminist theory's attention to productions of gender, femininity, and sexual difference, and to how these *feel*, necessarily helps reconceptualize feminized trauma. Black women (and particularly Black trans women) tend to have more frequent experiences of both macro traumas caused by clearly identifiable forms of violence *and* the more mundane, banal, and gnawing forms caused by everyday violations. I am informed by radical Black feminist scholarship that considers Black feminism and Black femininity as affective,[14] as felt, as lived—sometimes defensively (out of necessity and toward an [often obstructed] agency)[15]—in everyday environments that are traumatizing and debilitating insofar as they are saturated with racism, sexism, misogyny, and misogynoir,[16] and which condone and perpetuate Black unfreedom, violation, death, and harm (and/or threats thereof). Audre Lorde and, more recently, Treva Ellison, Amber Musser, Jennifer Nash, Sami Schalk, and C. Riley Snorton have theorized how structural racialized and gendered violence contributes to traumatic Black feminine subject formation. These scholars consider how (sometimes negative) affects associated with Black femininity inhere in subjects but are, in fact, *produced* within white supremacist, colonialist, misogynistic, transphobic, and otherwise toxic environments and relations wherein Black women are regularly injured—and then expected to heal themselves.

Historically through today, dominant psycho-logics have perpetuated racist, classist, and imperialist conceptualizations of femininity itself.[17] Simone Brown utilizes the concept *white prototypicality* to theorize the racialized normativity of biometrics (such as fingerprinting and other forms of surveillance).[18] Elsewhere, I have critiqued the ways that medical and scientific protocols both depend on and simultaneously disavow feminized trauma as they attempt to explain white feminine sexual "receptivity," "responsiveness," and "discordance" in depoliticized behaviorist and evolutionary terms.[19] Following Browne and other Black feminist scholars cited above, in this essay I consider how trauma frameworks are constituted within registers of racial normativity—a type of white prototypicality that dwells within the dominant psycho-logic for interpreting gendered and sexualized trauma. Given this white prototypicality, I seek new ways to understand feminized trauma experiences outside of both contemporary psychological frameworks and traditional psychoanalytic conventions. I foreground traumatic affects as they are lived at the level of raced, classed, and gendered populations, while simultaneously reconceptualizing how traumas are felt at the level of individual bodies and relationally among them. My intervention is threefold:

1. First, I suggest that, because sexual and gendered violence is directed disparately (both quantitatively and qualitatively) at groups of femmes which are internally diverse, trauma responses also necessarily look different across these populations. Feminized trauma must then be rethought, particularly when violence is slow, grating, cumulative, and disconcertingly ordinary and normalized to the point that it is *expected*—rather than posited as abnormal, exceptional, and something that can be healed from individually. Traditional psychological approaches to diagnosing and treating trauma are not only limited to race-, class-, nation-, and gender-specific subjects, but, in fact, produce and configure traumatized subjects as only intelligible when they fit within these boundaries.
2. Secondly, once trauma (as it is experienced by many feminized folk) is reconceived as banal, mundane, and chronic, I open up space for acknowledging, valuing, and centering a traumatic *dissociative-adjacent* standpoint (or sitpoint).[20] Absent in mainstream psychological frameworks for interpreting feminized trauma, this is an

invaluable perspective on sexual and gendered violence from which much can be learned.

3. Finally, within a disability justice framework,[21] I advocate that this traumatized femme perspective, epistemology, and form of knowledge-production provides the ground upon which survivors who live with raced, classed, and gendered trauma can come together as they enact radical care in community with each other, *fracturing* and *falling apart* together. My analysis seeks to illuminate the full spectrum of feminized trauma experience and amplify accounts rather than assuming unnarratibility. To this end, the notion that trauma is ontologically unspeakable must be called out for what it is—a form of silencing that is undoubtedly structural and political. Women and femmes—and here they are grouped together insofar as I am describing feminizing processes rather than femme identities, per se[22]—have been silenced, including when they try to speak of their traumas (or feel and register them outwardly, publicly). Creating space—and a fleshy and affective language of sorts—to narrate endured violences is part of an abolitionist justice project and can help to end expectations of silence. I argue that this will offer a different type of healing, as well, one that is not tied to individual rehabilitation, but which instead allows fractured populations—both fractured from traumas (but not fully split) and fractured along raced, classed, and gendered lines—to stand in solidarity and feel *differently* (not "better" in the vein of neoliberal productivity) together. With such a goal in mind, I argue that even a C-PTSD-based therapy and analysis framework is inadequate for fully attending to the insidious nature of everyday traumas, and that instead, a crip theory of *feminized fracture* or *falling apart* will help us move beyond the limitations of both PTSD and C-PTSD and their treatment. This affect-attendant, justice-seeking, cripistemological orientation to the multiplicity of traumatic iterations counters previous myopic formulations of trauma and its symptoms, and empowers and gives voice to those who are traumatized.

Feminized Trauma Across Populations: Biopolitics, Chronicity, and Dissociative-Adjacent States

Dissociation is what psychologists describe as the splitting off of mental processes from primary consciousness, as in amnesia or following certain traumatizing experiences. It is often understood to follow from sexual abuse and violence, and, in psychoanalytic theory, is interpreted as a psychic process resulting from a traumatic event that is rendered incapable of entering the main body of consciousness.[23] Alternating between numbness and hyperarousal, the dissociator may experience a separation of mind from body or a sense of being a detached observer of herself (depersonalization), and/or an alteration in her experience of the external world so that it seems unreal or that a given lived experience is not really happening (derealization). Importantly, dissociation has often been framed as something that "hysterical women" experience, and hysteria has thus functioned as both a diagnosis of somaticization and a rhetorical repudiation of excessive emotion and irrationality. As such, the medical discourses and clinical practices surrounding hysteria have been rightly critiqued through a feminist lens.[24]

Importantly, however, Sigmund Freud's original hysteria patients were almost entirely wealthy, white, cis women. And a member of this group, the typical hysterical figure, might in some cases actually be *believed* when recounting her trauma.[25] Upon this recounting,

she may even be interpreted as an "undeserving" victim, who had experienced an "unjust" violence enacted against her. In contrast, poor femmes of color have consistently been cast as complicit in or even responsible for the violences enacted against them, which has left their traumas unintelligible. A *victim*—categorically—did not deserve what happened to her. As the binary of "undeserving" versus "deserving" here is racialized, whiteness becomes constitutive of victimhood.

Insofar as dissociation eventually came to be broadly associated with PTSD, and as involving a full psychic split resulting from a discrete traumatic episode—an episode that is interpolated via bourgeois liberal rhetorics as an uncommon or abnormal experience, and one that is "unjust," "horrific," and most often committed by a "pathological" (and frequently racialized!) perpetrator against an "undeserving" victim—the state of dissociation itself is produced within a white and middle-class register. But there is an irony to this framework. Even as it has historically been wealthy, white, cis women whose hysteria and dissociation are identified, analyzed, and treated, in reality, it is working-class and poor femmes of color who experience sexual and gendered violence disproportionately and often on an ongoing basis. It is thus these individuals who may also disproportionately experience accompanying traumatic symptoms. A biopolitical[26] analysis which examines how certain populations are debilitated while their members' bodyminds are maimed, as part of neoliberal racist and nationalist governance projects,[27] can help flesh out a necessary reconceptualization of trauma in light of these disparities. And this reworking is imperative, as feminized trauma is quite literally being (re)configured and (re)allocated all the time, somewhere between and along a racialized and gendered biopolitics of life management and a necropolitics of death distribution.[28]

Consider the negligent treatment of femmes of color in the contemporary United States context. One example is the case of Tashonna Ward—a Black woman in Milwaukee who went to the emergency room of a local hospital with chest pains, was told she would have to wait six hours to be seen by a doctor, and died there halfway through her wait time.[29] Ward's story is an extreme example of sexist, racist, and classist violence, as we know that women's—and particularly Black women's—complaints about pain are often minimized or disregarded by medical professionals.[30] It is a different type of harm than the harm that is typically associated with gendered violence and resulting traumas; but it is also not so far removed from other feminized traumas from which it might normally be set apart. What was Ward's experience as she waited in the ER that day? What were her symptoms—beyond the physical symptoms she experienced on account of cardiomegaly or her enlarged heart (the posthumous diagnosis)? Is it possible that her chest pains and breathing trouble were also the result of accumulated, chronic traumas and anxiety? The trauma and anxiety of the unjust wait itself? Might these also be symptoms of the cumulative harms experienced over an entire life, particularly as a Black woman fighting to register to white clinicians and other medical professionals as someone who could even *be* traumatized?

The experiences of trans women migrant asylum seekers further suggest the need to ask such questions and the necessity of expanding our taxonomy of feminized trauma. In early 2020, fourteen trans women were transferred from the Cibola County Correctional Center in New Mexico to the Northwest ICE Processing Center in Washington. This move occurred after Roxsana Hernandez Rodriguez died of HIV-related complications in the Cibola County prison (but was later determined to have also been severely abused by prison staff during the time of her detention), and also after Johana Medina León died in a Texas hospital immediately after being released from an Immigration and Customs Enforcement

(ICE) detention center. Léon also showed signs of neglect, abuse, and lack of medical attention while she was detained. Both were migrant trans women who had experienced sexual and gendered violence in their home countries, experienced violence as they made their way through Mexico to the United States as they sought asylum, and then experienced further violence at the hands of ICE agents upon arriving in the United States and being detained. Rodriguez and Léon are only two examples of the many women in similar situations who also have existing chronic health conditions, including HIV, diabetes, and (C-)PTSD. In an interview for an article in the online magazine *Crosscut*, an El Salvadoran woman named Amara—also a detainee at the Northwest ICE Processing Center in Tacoma—tells the interviewer: "*Es fatal esto* (this is awful) . . . sometimes I miss having someone to talk to."[31] Her words are desperate, her affect despondent, yet she seems fully aware of her situation, rather than cut off from it (and yes, she can narrate her pain, and in fact suggests her desire to do so!). This aching desperation sounds like the result of trauma, but doesn't present as classic dissociation. Instead, it appears to manifest as a persistent desperation and chronic traumatic affect—mundane, banal, and almost expected, at this point, for women like her.

Within a crip framework,[32] dissociative-adjacent states which result from gendered and sexual trauma—and these forms of trauma themselves—can be interpreted as chronic. That is to say, states *akin* to dissociation may be experienced as the result of everyday, accumulated traumas, those which result not only from violence that is likely to be named as such within white liberal individualizing rhetorics (e.g., discrete and anomalous violent incidents such as "stranger rape") but also from gendered, sexualized, raced, and classed aggressions, population policing, abuse and detainment at the hands of agents of the neoliberal white supremacist nation-state, and repeated sexual harassment and assault. In their nagging, gnawing, and incomplete nature—and also in their persistence, ordinariness, and resistance to standard medical treatment (including treatment protocols that insist on self-recovery and individual pursuit of care/cure)—these dissociative-adjacent states may have more in common with chronic pain than with psychic splitting or dissociation in the traditional sense. To fully register these dissociative-adjacent states, we might take into account, for instance, the physical and geographical dislocation and dissociation (from home and everything they've known) that women like Roxsana, Johana, and Amara likely experienced as they sought asylum. We might assume these women hoped for better lives in the US, due in part to feminized traumas they had experienced in their home countries. What kinds of migrant dissociative-adjacent traumatic states did they live through? How are these experiences gendered and sexualized, but not in the ways to which we normally attend within colonialist typologies of trauma?

It is necessary to consider the limitations of current bio-behavioral and historical configurations of trauma, not only because these paradigms elide race, class, and other differences in how gendered and sexual violence are inflicted and experienced, but also because these frameworks are rooted in (neo)liberal, white supremacist formulations that conceive of minds and bodies as separate. By contrast, *feminine fracturing* or *falling apart* —as symptom, standpoint/sitpoint, and mode of care—centers trauma survivors whose experiences are evidence of more complex renderings of both bodyminds and femininity. A fractured or falling-apart method, theory, heuristic, and hermeneutic attends to racism, classism, and nationalism as they are tethered to gendered and sexual violence. Thus, fracturing or falling apart is not only a corrective to the ableist and ablesanist[33] "clean break" conceptualization inherent in conventional notions of traumatic or hysterical dissociation, but it is also a corrective to the white liberal expectation that sexual violence

is a one-off, special, exceptional, or uncommon experience from which one can normatively recover or heal—on one's own.

Fleshing Feminine Fracture: Dissociative-Adjacent Ways of Knowing and Feeling

Insofar as dissociation was often comorbid with a diagnosis of hysteria for early psychoanalysts like Freud and Josef Breuer, there is a long history (or hystery) of dissociation as feminized, or as part of a sequelae of feminine neuroses. But if we take seriously that women are more likely to dissociate, we must also follow the earliest Freud and remember that this occurs so often in women (and here, I will add *femmes* more broadly to update Freud's argument) due to their disproportionate experiences of sexual violence and abuse.[34] Today, women and femmes continue to be unduly violated, and trans women, particularly Black trans women and other femmes of color, are disproportionately likely to experience violence—including sexual violence—during their lives.[35] Further, current research suggests that while 6.8% of the general adult population in the United States report symptoms of PTSD, prevalence estimates of trauma among trans folks range from 18% to 61%—and according to recent studies, discrimination and assault associated purely with being trans (rather than with exogenous experiences such as sexual abuse) significantly amplify PTSD symptoms among transgender folks.[36] These symptoms are, of course, exacerbated when intersecting experiences of oppression are at play. Given these disparities in proximity to trauma, and because we are in an age of ever-present yet unspectacular harm, I argue that we are also in a moment in which it is imperative to rethink structures of gender, race, class, and nation as structures of feeling[37] which are ontologically shaped by closeness to supremacist state violence. It is time to reconceptualize sexual and gendered trauma, the logic of dissociation, and the affective structure of femininity itself.

If part of living as a femme-identified or femme-coded individual—and particularly as a Black woman or femme of color—involves living with apprehension, hyper-alertness, and the daily specter of anticipated violence, then how does this affect symptomology? What do symptoms look like when they are the result of banal, chronic, slow violence? If they follow from everyday, grey brutality and ordinary crises? What if there is a detachment, but it is not a full rupture, and instead . . . fragmentary? Always bubbling up, but never completely coming to the surface, an embodied-psychic stretching, to the point where the bodymind feels threadbare . . . never fully numb, but never fully (or hyper-) vigilant. Maybe the dissociative-adjacent symptom looks instead like anxiety, or it's akin to brain fog[38]—pervasive, yet partial—or it's the perpetual feeling that you're about to fall apart, to come unglued. Maybe it's having a constant lump in your throat, a racing heartbeat, and radiating tension while also feeling utterly empty and dazed when you read the news, when you are out on the street. Maybe the psychic split is never finished—a fracture, fleshed-over . . . semi-sutured . . . but never fully severed?

Not only might we ask what this shift to a new framework for trauma symptomology looks like, how it presents, but also: what knowledge does shifting from *breaking* / *splitting* to *fracturing* / *falling apart* make possible? And legible? Feminine fracture then is both symptom and standpoint/sitpoint. But if it is a standpoint/sitpoint, maybe it is also a rallying point . . . and even a rallying cry.[39]

To begin this project of fleshing feminine fracture, we might take the experience of dissociative-adjacency as a point from which to theorize. Returning again to early psychoanalysis, I propose that we do this in the vein of Freud's and Breuer's notion of hysteria as an altered state of consciousness, as, in fact, *double consciousness*.[40] This notion is particularly apt here as it shares many uncanny epistemological and phenomenological assumptions with *double consciousness* as it has been theorized by W. E. B. Du Bois[41] and later as *bifurcation of consciousness* by Dorothy Smith.[42] And most usefully, Black feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins[43] and Kimberlé Crenshaw[44] have utilized intersectional analyses to bring these frameworks together. I follow the work of Jennifer Nash[45] and Jasbir Puar[46] who consider (in addition to the feeling of being multiply marginalized) how intersectionality might be experienced affectively, and what types of feelings "becoming-intersectional" and being forced into a defensive posture around intersectionality elicit.[47] This ontological orientation to intersectionality-as-event can help illuminate how a traumatic double consciousness as sequelae of gendered and sexual violence is inextricable from racism and white supremacy. How might we honor this feminized, racialized, and classed experience while simultaneously taking care not to essentialize or universalize it? How is a traumatic double consciousness kindred with fracturing and falling apart? In our contemporary climate of slow violence and crisis ordinariness, how do these ways of knowing, feeling, and living trauma manifest? And how are they contoured by difference—including the difference that race makes?

In April 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Latina trans activist Lorena Borjas fell ill with the virus and passed away, leaving a deep and painful void in her community. In a tribute to Borjas's life, another NYC-based activist and writer, Cecilia Gentili, articulates a type of feminized traumatic experience that feels chronic, heavy, ossified, sedimented:

> Many of us have been forsaken by our families, found ourselves homeless and deprived of support from teachers, co-workers, and employers. We've lived through extreme poverty—have made cohabitation with risk and danger part of our normal. Transgender women of color—like she was, like I am—know the uncertainty of taking each step as if it may be our last. We know the weariness of walking under the weight of transphobia, racism, and misogyny.[48]

The burden described here might not be easy to recover from; one might be more likely to feel as though she will fall apart beneath it. In order to get closer to feeling/understanding/recognizing falling apart—an experience akin to dissociation, derealization, and depersonalization but not quite the same thing—I propose that, in addition to embracing a traumatic or hysterical double consciousness, we work backward. Here, a cripistemology of feminine fracturing or falling apart has a kinship with both double consciousness and feeling backward, which might involve an "embracing of loss and risking of abjection"[49]—and deeply resonates with what Gentili describes above. This kinship is clear, in that a traumatic or hysterical double consciousness, feeling backward, and feminine fracturing and falling apart all fuck with time and space. They alter our perception, allow for altered perception, and provide new forms of affective knowledge through altered perception, and what it makes intelligible. This has direct import for reconceptualizing trauma and its sequelae. Fracturing and falling apart, alongside traumatic/hysterical double consciousness and feeling backward, all expand how we interpret feminized trauma, as they are standpoints/sitpoints which are explicitly anti-chrononormative.[50]

An imagined place of recovery can be a starting point from which to work in order to better understand the experience of feminized trauma—particularly insofar as the injury that is feminized trauma is, in part, *constituted* by the non-negotiable injunction to recover. Recovery and rehabilitation are normative processes, which involve taking individual action—but trauma, as it is traditionally framed, is "paralyzing," even "crippling." So, once again, we have a paradox. But if we conceive of paralysis and crippling outside of this individualizing logic of recovery, beyond the logic of unnarratability, and instead as possible to speak about or feel and even *worth* speaking about and feeling, and we do this alongside others who are injured, then we may be able to get past this seemingly insuperable foreclosure. Thus, feeling backward, along with embracing traumatic double consciousness, are central to understanding feminine fracturing as an alternative to dissociation, and as an alternative to the conceptualization of trauma as breach—as a break between a past and present self, or between a body and a mind. This alternative framing also exposes how normative formulations of gendered and sexualized trauma have been founded upon a specific vision of an innocent and whole (white) woman, who is then damaged and broken, but who is finally cured and can live normally (normatively) again. If we look at the ways that traumatized people have been and continue to be *expected to recover*, we can come closer to a cripistemology of feminized fracture, and also get outside of the white, bourgeois, cishet femininity built into formulations of gendered and sexualized trauma. Further, taking seriously how diverse feminized and traumatized populations have been expected to heal themselves allows us to consider more communal and radical ways of caring for each other.

Radical Crip Solidarity, Revolutionary Fracture, and Abolition/Liberation through Falling Apart

In order to make space for different types of trauma response and push for accompanying alternative forms of treatment, I want to consider an extreme (yet all-too-common, expected, and *accepted*) type of gendered and racialized violence—that of the brutal treatment of incarcerated domestic and sexual assault survivors (who are often women of color). The prison abolition organization Survived & Punished focuses on helping criminalized survivors by "rais[ing] awareness about the integrated relationship between systems of punishment and the pervasiveness of gender violence."[51] Mariame Kaba, founder of Survived & Punished, stated in a 2019 article for *The Guardian*, "Black women have always been vulnerable to violence in this country and have long been judged as having 'no selves to defend' . . . survivors are criminalized for self-defense, failing to control abusers' violence, migration, removing their children from situations of abuse, being coerced into criminalized activity and securing resources needed to live day to day while suffering economic abuse."[52] Kaba clarifies how survivors of sexual abuse, domestic violence, and gendered assault—particularly those who are Black women and other women of color—are more likely than not to end up incarcerated or stuck somewhere in the criminal punishment system: "Multiple studies indicate that between 71% and 95% of incarcerated women have experienced physical violence from an intimate partner. In addition, many have experienced multiple forms of physical and sexual abuse in childhood and as adults."[53] Following the work of other researchers and policy makers, Kaba refers to this as the "abuse-to-prison pipeline"[54]—and fully brings home how "treatment" for traumatic violence can end up iatrogenically harming survivors. Too many women and femmes who are survivors end up incarcerated, which in many cases in turn only

traumatizes them further. The cycle is self-perpetuating, and the rigidity and narrowness of current conceptions of trauma and its symptoms do nothing to help these women. If anything, white colonial psycho-logics are just another brick in the wall, and these ossified trauma frameworks themselves also iatrogenically traumatize survivors and reproduce violence. This is further demonstrated by how difficult it is for many incarcerated women to get any help in prison for the traumas they have endured—or rather, how prison, in fact, structurally *denies* trauma and mental health support to incarcerated women—and by data that suggest that many survivors are further violated at the hands of police and prison guards.[55]

In light of the real differences in type and frequency of gendered violence experienced by different feminized folk, and the elusiveness of the trauma responses elicited, I return again to falling-apartness and feminine fracturing as vantage points from which to learn, which move us toward survivorhood as communal and surviving together as a form of radical care. A fractured, falling-apart frame shifts the mandate of cure away from survivors themselves, and instead to a toxic culture, economic system, and complex of racist punishing structures that desperately need to be fixed—or, better yet, abolished. Fracturing and falling apart also suggest a way toward feeling *different*—not *cured*—as a method for real live survival for the living, that is less likely than today's buzzy cure-alls (such as mindfulness or CBT, practices which may be part of what Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha calls the "survivor industrial complex"[56]) to isolate, individualize, neoliberalize, and victim-blame. This is because feminine fracturing and falling apart advocate the exact opposite of what is prescribed via normative psycho-logic—instead of keeping it together, why don't we just let it all go?

In 2019, after more than two dozen trans women detained in the Cibola County Correctional Center penned a letter in Spanish describing the negligence, inadequate medical care, and mistreatment and abuse they experienced at the hands of prison staff, multiple advocacy and activist groups, including Phoenix-based Trans Queer Pueblo (to whom the letter was originally sent), began to organize on behalf of the women. Less than a year later, several organizations, including Seattle-based OneAmerica and La Resistencia, in addition to other advocacy groups for undocumented LGBTQ+ folks, added to it and then sent the letter to acting ICE Director Matthew Albence and acting Department of Homeland Security secretary Chad Wolf. The letter calls for ICE facilities to comply with standards of care for transgender individuals. The act of writing this letter, across multiple groups, over time, as part of a coalition to help those with the least power in the chain, is a clear example of traumatized people having each other's backs as a form of radical communal care.

Another example of folks having each other's backs, as they fracture and fall apart, can be found in the aforementioned trans activist community in Queens, New York, who came together to support each other after activist and *mother* Lorena Borjas died of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020. The poignancy and power of Borjas's life and words and forms of care were described as such: "She pushed us to shine authentically, to become an unstoppable insubordination, a scream of subversion that says, 'I am here, and I deserve happiness, too.'"[57] *Screaming subversion*, rather than holding it all in, as a form of revolutionary communal care, sounds much different than what conventional psycho-logic might prescribe as a treatment for trauma. Feminine fracturing and falling apart then might entail screaming subversion, similar to what Debanuj DasGupta has described as the liberating power of trans women's public narratives to present "the potential of mobilizing trauma toward a radical queer migrant politics that resists both state violence and savior

politics."[58] This certainly contrasts with "getting better," normatively, in order to be a more "productive" member of neoliberal capitalist society.

In a series of tweets, non-binary trans woman and somatics practitioner Kai Cheng Thom (@razorfemme on Twitter) also called out the normative emphasis on "getting better" (in the form of seeking emotional homeostasis or nervous re-regulation), under the fictitious logic of a return to safety, as a form of gaslighting for POC trauma survivors:

> Colonial psychology and psychiatry reveal their allegiance to the status quo in their approach to trauma: that resourcing must come from within oneself rather than from the collective. That trauma recovery is feeling safe in society, when in fact society is the source of trauma . . . in the cauldron of social justice healing praxis, we must aim for relationality that has the potential to generate social change, to generate insurrection . . . the ultimate question of social justice somatics is not 'how can we cure the traumatized body so that it can return to productive society?'—the question of dominant psychology. Our question is: 'how can we heal our traumatized bodies so that we may love each other & fight together?'[59]

In light of these words, we might return to the advocacy letter written to the directors of ICE and Homeland Security, as an example of how survivors forming coalitions can gesture toward possible liberatory avenues that take us beyond rehabilitation and recovery. It is also important to note that this letter did have an impact; these ICE detention centers were forced to comply with (marginal) standards of care for transgender individuals (not a marginal gain). So not only can the act of forming collectives and coalitions be therapeutic, it can also put pressure on supremacist nation-states by calling out violence which is state-sanctioned and racialized. And talking about these things, with others, thus abolishing the mandate to silence, can make those conversations as quotidian and mundane as these forms of violence are currently.

The words of trauma survivors here are instructive in understanding fracturing and falling apart. Along these collectivist lines, Piepzna-Samarasinha articulates an anti-ableist vision of survivorhood: "I don't want to be fixed, if being fixed means being bleached of memory, untaught by what I have learned through this miracle of surviving. My survivorhood is not an individual problem. I want the communion of all of us who have survived, and the knowledge."[60] And Eli Clare has also brilliantly made the case for coalition, collectivism, and communion in contrast to cure, summing up the power of mutuality and solidarity: "Part of claiming disability is choosing this messy, imperfect work-in-progress called interdependence."[61]

Adding to these calls, I make the case for collective fracturing and falling apart as a way to refuse victim-blaming and silence. If we turn toward new formulations of trauma and its sequelic residuum, if we attend to the everyday and insidious nature of these dissociative-adjacent experiences, we also open up space for femmes, specifically trans women and femmes of color, to be felt and accessed, to feel and access each other, to fall apart together. This, a queer crip abolitionist strategy, may move us closer to changing the affective structure of traumatic femininity and the reality of feminized trauma—both in our daily lives and also in Psychology's imaginary. And further, this affective restructuring may allow us to move away from individual responsibility for our own healing and toward collectively and mutually validating ways of living, forms of life, that shatter the directive to be silent. This resonates with what the organizers with Survived & Punished call a *politics*

of relationality, in opposition to a *politics of exceptionalism*, as they apply these in their abolitionist work:

> We promote a 'politics of relationality,' or strategies that help people engage the broader crisis of criminalization, and help create a public context for others to talk about their own experiences of surviving violence and being punished for that survival. As CeCe McDonald—a Black trans woman who is an abolitionist leader, was imprisoned for self-defense, and whose freedom was supported by the #FreeCeCe grassroots defense campaign—has said, 'I want people to not just hear me, but to live through me, to live through this experience to give themselves a platform.'[62]

A queer crip strategy of femme falling apart must, first and foremost, attend to difference. It must be oriented toward abolition and justice, and it must be resolutely anti-racist, anti-colonialist, and anti-capitalist. Those with relative privilege must always keep in mind, front and center, the range and multiplicity of experiences—and forms of treatment (or lack thereof)—for traumatized folks. Even as the obstacle course is always moving and changing, we must remember that some are allowed to pass through the very roadblocks that are set up to harm and hinder others. Sara Ahmed advocates that the very "hammers" that destroy the most marginalized and traumatized among us can (and *must*) be picked up by those who have been harmed less, and used against the injurious system itself:

> In chipping away, we come into contact with those who are stopped by what allowed us to pass through. We happen upon each other. We witness the work each other is doing, and we recognize each other through that work. And we take up arms when we combine our forces. We speak up; we rise up . . . chip, chip, chip: an affinity of hammers is what we are working toward.[63]

Maybe there is some promise, then, in embracing an interdependent, communal fracturing or falling apart? An affinity or coalition or collective of the traumatized? Maybe there is a way to fall apart with others who are falling apart, and leak into each other like a leaky gross army of falling-apart femmes. And maybe we could not fight anyone as an army, but just be together, feel together, help each other, support each other, and maybe that would be some type of pleasurable, some type of revolutionary, some type of survival?

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Notes

1. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 119. See also Susan J. Brison, "Everyday Atrocities and Ordinary Miracles, or Why I (Still) Bear Witness to Sexual Violence (But Not Too Often)," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer, 2008): 188–198; Laura S. Brown, "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma," *American Imago* 48 (1991): 119–133. Second-wave feminists had been making this argument for decades—but it wasn't until the 1990s that the idea that PTSD happened to women too, in unique ways, was codified in psychiatric language. However, although it has informed clinical practice for some psychotherapists working with trauma survivors, C-PTSD was never included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

2. Brown, "Not Outside the Range."

3. Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Sharon L. Snyder & David T. Mitchell, *Cultural Locations of Disability* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

4. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

5. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

6. Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

7. Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

8. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

9. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 2011.

10. Under the umbrella of critical disability studies, there are many specific theoretical frameworks that are invaluable to my current project insofar as they address mental illness, trauma, and stigma. These include feminist disability studies, madness studies, and cripistemologies or criphystemologies. On feminist disability studies, see Elizabeth J. Donaldson, "The Corpus of the Madwoman: Toward a Feminist Disability Studies Theory of Embodiment and Mental Illness," *NWSA Journal* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 99–119; Merri Lisa Johnson, *Girl In Need of a Tourniquet: Memoir of a Borderline Personality* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2010) and "Neuroqueer Feminism: Turning with Tenderness toward Borderline Personality Disorder," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 46, no. 3 (2021): 635-662, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/712081 < https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/712081> . On madness studies, see Tanja Aho, Liat Ben-Moshe, and Leon Hilton, "Mad Futures: Affect/Theory/Violence," American Quarterly 69, no. 2 (June 2017): 291–302; Brenda A. LeFrançois, Robert Menzies, and Geoffrey Reaume, eds., *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, Inc., 2013). On cripistemologies, see Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer, "Cripistemologies: Introduction," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 2 (2014): 127–147). On crip*hy*stemologies, see Anna Mollow, "Criphystemologies: What Disability Theory Needs to Know about Hysteria," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 2 (2014): 185–201.

11. Jina B. Kim, "Toward a Crip-of-Color Critique: Thinking with Minich's 'Enabling Whom?'" *Lateral* 6, no. 1 (April 2017), https://doi.org/10.25158/L6.1.14 < https://doi.org/10.25158/L6.1.14> .

12. Jina B. Kim & Sami Schalk, "Integrating Race, Transforming Feminist Disability Studies," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 46, no. 1 (Autumn 2020): 31–55.

13. Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Sami Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

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Treva Ellison, "The Labor of Werqing It: The Performance and Protest Strategies of Sir Lady Java," in *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, ed. Tourmaline, Eric A. Stanley, & Johanna Burton (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017), 1–21; Amber Musser, *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism* (New York: New York University Press, 2014) and *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Jennifer Nash, *The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014) and *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019); Therí Alyce Pickens, *Black Madness :: Mad Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019); Sami Schalk, "Contextualizing Black Disability and the Culture of Dissemblance," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 45, no. 3 (Spring 2020): 535–540; Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

15. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined*, 2019.

16. Moya Bailey & Trudy, "On Misogynoir: Citation, Erasure, and Plagiarism," *Feminist Media Studies* 18 (2018): 762–768.

17. For a full elucidation of the whiteness of sexual difference and the origins of white femininity at the expense of Black bodies and lives, see Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford, 1997); Sally Markowitz, "Pelvic Politics: Sexual Dimorphism and Racial Difference," *Signs* 26, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 389–414; Kyla Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both* Sides, 2017; Siobhan Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); and Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 64–81.

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19. Alyson K. Spurgas, *Diagnosing Desire: Biopolitics and Femininity into the Twenty-First Century* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2020).

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22. This emphasis on *processes of feminization*—not all of which are consensual or desired by those who are feminized—is one thing that distinguishes my project from recent scholars of what has been termed "femme theory." See Rhea Ashley Hoskin, "Can Femme be Theory? Exploring the Epistemological and Methodological Possibilities of Femme," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 25, no. 1 (2021): 1–17, and Hoskin & Taylor, "Femme Resistance: The Femme-inine Art of Failure," *Psychology & Sexuality* 10, no. 4 (2019): 281–300, for examples. While femme theory scholars importantly call for attention to femme epistemologies, knowledge production, and narratives of failure, which are relevant to my project, their emphasis on femininity or femme identity as "an

intersectional axis of identity" diverges from my discussion of feminization as a sometimes coercive and traumatic experience contoured by difference, and one that is not always desirable nor tethered to identity (or at least not rationally so, or in a celebratory way). To this end, my analysis considers feminization as an existential and ontological process that can shore up negative affects, and which can be accompanied by illness, trauma, and debility—for instance as it is theorized by Andrea Long Chu in her recent book *Females: A Concern* (New York: Verso, 2019) and by Johanna Hedva in their 2015 essay "Sick Woman Theory" (http://www.maskmagazine.com/not-again/struggle/sick-woman-theory < http://www.maskmagazine.com/not-again/struggle/sick-woman-theory>).

23. Sigmund Freud, "The Aetiology of Hysteria," in *Collected Papers, Volume 1* (London: The Hogarth Press, {1896} 1950), 183–219.

24. For an example, see Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts' Advice to Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 1978).

25. For the earliest Freud, hysteria and its dissociative sequelae were symptoms of real sexual abuse; for the later Freud, they were physical manifestations of unrealized rape fantasies. But psychotherapists since Freud have been more likely to honor the veracity of (at least *some*) of their patients' descriptions of abuse. See Karin Ahbel-Rappe, "'I No Longer Believe': Did Freud Abandon the Seduction Theory?" *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 54, no. 1 (2006): 171–199.

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33. Aho, Ben-Moshe, and Hilton, "Mad Futures: Affect/Theory/Violence."

34. Ahbel-Rappe, "'I No Longer Believe,'" 2006.

35. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, "A National Epidemic: Fatal Anti-Transgender Violence in America in 2018." See this Human Rights Campaign report for one example:

https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/AntiTransViolence-2018Report-Final.pdf?_ga=2.222631003.1372062788.1542644075-911733991.1531685379 < https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/AntiTransViolence-2018Report-Final.pdf?_ga=2.222631003.1372062788.1542644075-911733991.1531685379>

36. Sari L. Reisner, Jaclyn M. White Hughto, Kristi E. Gamarel, Alex S. Keuroghlian, Lauren Mizock, and John Pachankis, "Discriminatory Experiences Associated with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms among Transgender Adults," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 63, no. 5 (October 2016): 509–519.

37. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

38. Mel Y. Chen, "Brain Fog: The Race for Cripistemology," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 2 (2014): 171–184.

39. While I critique the directive to "feminine resilience," I am not making a case for "feminine failure," per se. Injunctions to "queer resilience" have been rightfully critiqued (see Cynthia Barounis, *Vulnerable Constitutions: Queerness, Disability, and the Remaking of American Manhood* {Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019}), and we now too often expect and call for feminine resilience, as well. As is made crystal clear in the stories of the femmes of color left to die in emergency rooms and detained and abused in prisons and detention centers, women and femmes are expected to be silent, solitary, resilient, and resolute in the face of so much degradation, coercion, and violence. Because of this expectation, it may seem logical to make a case for feminine failure (see Hoskin and Taylor, "Femme Resistance: The Femme-inine Art of Failure"; Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* {Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011}). Some femmes may refuse or fail as a response to normalized sexual, gendered, racialized, and state-sanctioned violence, and thus refusal, failure, or incompetence at neoliberal feminine personhood may certainly be one revolutionary response. However, it can also be frustrating to hear talk of the *revolutionary potential of failure* when you have a *diagnosed history of failing* by, for instance, cutting or hurting yourself, by living with catastrophic thinking that consumes you, by feeling like your life is dictated by uncontrollable and intense emotional highs and lows, by experiencing flashbacks and feeling triggered and being overwhelmed by pain (see Merri Lisa Johnson, "Bad Romance: A Crip Feminist Critique of Queer Failure," Hypatia 30, no. 1 {Winter 2015}: 251–267). *Failure* and *fracturing / falling apart* are not quite the same thing, then: the difference is in the communality, collectivism, and coalitional aspects of a fractured praxis—falling apart and fracturing, as I consider them here, are always guided by solidarity and justice, abolition and liberation, and are thus inherently collective and communal pursuits. Rather than aspects of identity or individual acts (which I associate more with *failure*), *fracturing* and *falling apart* are radical forms of care and mutual aid.

40. Yes, Freud and Breuer actually called it this! Herman documents their use of the term "double consciousness" to describe how "unbearable emotional reactions to traumatic events produced an altered state of consciousness, which in turn induced hysterical symptoms" (Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 12).

41. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: The Modern Library, {1903} 1996).

42. Dorothy Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Open University Press, 1987).

43. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, {1990} 1999).

44. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241–1299.

45. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined*.

46. Jasbir K. Puar, "'I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess': Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory," *philoSOPHIA* 2, no. 1 (2012): 49–66.

47. Here, I mean both the feelings elicited by living with interlocking oppressions, and also the feelings elicited by the overextenstion of the analytic itself. Both Puar and Nash describe ambivalence regarding intersectionality without eschewing the theory altogether; in fact, Nash

specifically argues that "intersectionality" as an analytic has become a type of property that Black feminists are *expected* to defend, within the "intersectionality wars." Nash attends to how intersectionality has come to function as a symbol of how to salvage (white) feminism, and suggests that its overinvestment and overdetermination (by everyone else!) exhausts the energy and resources of Black feminists and Black women more broadly. ↩

48. Cecilia Gentili, "What Lorena Borjas Did for the Trans Girls of Queens," *New York Times*, April 11, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/opinion/lorena-borjas-coronavirus.html < https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/opinion/lorena-borjas-coronavirus.html> . ↩
49. Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). ↩
50. Freeman, *Time Binds*. ↩
51. "About S&P," https://survivedandpunished.org/about/ < https://survivedandpunished.org/about/> . ↩
52. Mariame Kaba, "Black Women Punished for Self-Defense Must Be Freed from their Cages," *The Guardian*, January 3, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/03/cyntoia-brown-marissa-alexander-black-women-self-defense-prison < https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/03/cyntoia-brown-marissa-alexander-black-women-self-defense-prison> ↩
53. Kaba, "Black Women Punished for Self-Defense." ↩
54. Kaba, "Black Women Punished for Self-Defense"; see also Malika Saada Saar, Rebecca Epstein, Lindsay Rosenthal, andYasmin Vafa, "The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story," https://www.law.georgetown.edu/poverty-inequality-center/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2019/02/The-Sexual-Abuse-To-Prison-Pipeline-The-Girls%E2%80%99-Story.pdf < https://www.law.georgetown.edu/poverty-inequality-center/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2019/02/The-Sexual-Abuse-To-Prison-Pipeline-The-Girls%E2%80%99-Story.pdf> ↩
55. Kaba, "Black Women Punished for Self-Defense." ↩
56. Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work*, 229. ↩
57. Gentili, "What Lorena Borjas Did for the Trans Girls of Queens." ↩
58. Debanuj DasGupta, "Rescripting Trauma: Trans/Gender Detention Politics and Desire in the United States," *Women's Studies in Communication* 41, no. 4 (2018): 324–328. ↩
59. Kai Cheng Thom (@kaichengthom) via *The Indigenous Anarchist* (@theindigenousanarchist) on Instagram, January 30, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CKry1HWh3ig/ < https://www.instagram.com/p/CKry1HWh3ig/> . ↩
60. Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work*, 239. ↩
61. Clare, *Brilliant Imperfections*, 136. ↩
62. "About S&P," https://survivedandpunished.org/about/ < https://survivedandpunished.org/about/> ↩
63. Sara Ahmed, "An Affinity of Hammers," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 1-2 (2016): 33, https://read.dukeupress.edu/tsq/article-abstract/3/1-2/22/91760/An-Affinity-of-Hammers < https://read.dukeupress.edu/tsq/article-abstract/3/1-2/22/91760/An-Affinity-of-Hammers?redirectedFrom=fulltext> . ↩

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Crip Collectivity Beyond Neoliberalism in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*

by Jess Whatcott | Cripistemologies of Crisis: Emergent Knowledges for the Present, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT The importance of Octavia Butler's 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower* continues to crystalize, as Butler's prescient imagining of urban California torn apart by neoliberal divestment comes to fruition. Following in the space opened up by Black feminist scholarship on Butler, the present essay examines her relevance beyond literary and cultural studies. I argue that *Parable* is a Black feminist crip theorization of political economy that diagnoses the disabling conditions of precarity under neoliberalism and also prescribes collectivity for crip and mad survival. Neoliberalism describes a global stage of advanced capitalism wherein governments are both incentivized and disciplined into enforcing economic policies that include privatization, deregulation, and market liberalization. As Jodi Melamed defines it, neoliberalism requires a certain kind of political governance, that puts the interests of business over the well-being of people (2011). Neoliberal governance engenders what I call "disabling contradictions," yet the blame for conditions of precarity is deflected onto bodyminds themselves. In *Parable of the Sower*, Butler theorizes these disabling contradictions of neoliberal governance under advanced capitalism, drawing into focus the political economic systems that cause suffering. Parable also depicts strategies for crip and mad survival that are made possible through the conscious creation of community and networks of solidarity that counter the neoliberal state's devaluation of bodyminds. Gathering to read and discuss the novel, rather than a distraction from the crises, furthers the emergence of crip and mad collectivities. As such, it is an urgent and timely practice for building futures for crip and mad people.

KEYWORDS crip, cripistemology, disability, neoliberalism, Octavia Butler, precarity

The importance of Octavia Butler's 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower* continues to crystalize, as the July 20, 2024 opening date of the novel draws near and Butler's prescient imagining of urban California reshaped by fire seemingly comes true. Standing out among recent scholarship on Butler's writing are Therí Alyce Pickens's and Sami Schalk's evaluations that Butler's novels constitute an essential Black feminist theory of disability and madness.[1] Following in the space opened up by Pickens's and Schalk's analyses, the present essay also examines Butler's relevance beyond literary and cultural studies. I will argue that *Parable* is a Black feminist crip theorization of political economy that diagnoses the disabling conditions of precarity under neoliberalism and prescribes collectivity for crip survival.

Neoliberalism describes a global stage of advanced capitalism wherein governments are both incentivized and disciplined by international institutions and multilateral agreements into enforcing economic policies that include privatization, deregulation, and market liberalization.[2] As Jodi Melamed defines it, neoliberalism requires a certain kind of

political governance, through which states rationalize decisions as if they were operating as "businesses whose business is to engineer and manage human, organizational, legal, and natural resources to maximize value and optimize productivity."[3] Such neoliberal governance engenders what I call "disabling contradictions," consisting of, first, reinvigorated eugenicist ideologies designed to remove racialized and gendered threats to the social body. Second, neoliberalism generates new conditions of precarity that are disabling, including the privatization of care for elders, children, and disabled people coinciding with the downward spiral of wages vis-à-vis the cost of living. Deflecting attention from these neoliberal economic policies, the source of crises of precarity are displaced onto racialized, gendered, disabled and mad bodyminds ourselves, depicting us as broken, deviant, and immoral, and thus responsible for our own precarious conditions.[4]

In *Parable of the Sower*, Butler maps these (at the time of her writing, still emergent) disabling contradictions of neoliberal governance under advanced capitalism. Building on Pickens's and Schalk's insights that Butler's work is about Black femme *disability* because of the centering of Black femme impairment, I argue that *Parable of the Sower* "cripistemologically" theorizes neoliberal governance.[5] In examining *Parable* as "crip" text, I emphasize what the novel theorizes about advanced capitalist neoliberal precarity. Crip theorizations of neoliberalism are also the subject of Robert McRuer's book *Crip Times* (2018), in which he analyzes dominant representations of disability that have been put to work in buttressing neoliberal austerity, as well as crip cultural productions that exceed neoliberal foreclosures.[6] The present essay turns similarly to representations of disability—in this case fictional—that depict what McRuer (borrowing from José Esteban Muñoz) calls "queer and crip horizons."

As Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown have elaborated, the significance of Butler's work lies not only in her diagnosis of dystopia, but also in her depiction of femme of color survival and thriving.[7] *Parable* proposes that survival and thriving are made possible through the creation of community and networks of solidarity—akin to what McRuer calls "resistant, radical, *pornographic* crip sociality"—that exceed the austerity projects of neoliberal agendas.[8] Butler's imaginary of "feminist, queer, crip" flourishing (to borrow from Alison Kafer), through the emergence of the collective, serves as a vision of possible life that ruptures the disabling modes of privatization and individual self-sufficiency perpetuated by neoliberal interventions.[9]

Cripistemologies and Neoliberal Crisis

In the 2013 special issue of the *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer identify cripistemologies as forms of "prohibited knowledge" that emerge out of the experience of disability.[10] Johnson and McRuer's essay contributed to ushering in a critical form of disability studies, joining other work such as earlier issues of *Lateral* that featured Julie Avril Minich, Jina B. Kim, and Sami Schalk.[11] Johnson and McRuer's contribution to this conversation was to coin "cripistemology," as a way of dismantling the expectation of knowledge from disability "experts," and prioritizing instead the knowledges of those whose bodyminds cannot or will not be cured into normativity. Johnson and McRuer are insistent on taking a capacious view of what experiencing disability means, and consequently who is capable

of producing knowledge through cripistemological methods; Johnson and McRuer include, importantly, the knowledge gained from being in relation with another who has been disabled.

Decentering the disability expert explodes the conventional disability studies canon. In a section called "Sensational Crips," Johnson and McRuer ground their theory in women of color feminisms and queer theory.[12] What distinguishes expertise on disability (conventional disability studies) from their conceptualization of cripistemology (critical disability studies), is this specific genealogy that insists on reading disability in and through imbrications with gender, sexuality, class, and race. For example, Jina B. Kim imagines a "crip-of-color critique" that links together women of color feminist texts that explore themes of chronic illness (Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa), with recent disability scholarship that foregrounds race (Jasbir Puar, Therí Pickens), through a coalitional framework of queer of color critique (Cathy Cohen, Rodrick Ferguson).[13] In the present study, I pick up on the radical political economy thread within critical disability studies that also marks it as a distinct formation. Just as feminist of color and queer of color theory is grounded in Marxist political economy, Johnson and McRuer's conceptualization indicates that critical disability studies offer a unique critique of formations of capitalism, and specifically the disabling conditions of precarity under neoliberalism.[14]

Crips and mad people offer knowledge that emanates from their position as a "surplus" class whose presence threatens the political and economic order.[15] As other scholars have elaborated, society has developed the ideology, since at least the end of the nineteenth century, that bodyminds that carry disease, illness, and impairment are a "menace."[16] This ideology, that I would label as eugenics, promises a future of human perfection through scientifically guided interventions that dispose of diseased, ill, and impaired bodyminds. During the so-called eugenics era of the 1890s to 1940s, state and federal policies were implemented in the name of saving the human race and western civilization from rapid degeneration caused by the reproduction of those from so-called defective bloodlines.[17] Eugenics policies, including institutionalization, sterilization, restrictive immigration, and deportation, articulated disabled and mad bodyminds as crises that threatened the imagined future of human perfection.[18] However, these policies fluctuated between contradictory impulses. On the one side, the crisis of tainted bloodlines called for the state-sanctioned neglect and premature death of those inside eugenics institutions, those whose bodyminds could not be made to conform to normative standards of health. On the other side, paradoxically, the state also promised to create perfect human health through experimental treatments, rehabilitation programs, and cures, including reproductive sterilization on the very same bodies that were neglected and exposed to death.[19]

The surplus class of disabled and mad bodyminds constructed in the eugenics era programs was gendered and racialized.[20] The sociotechnical imaginary of eugenics conjured a specifically "female" threat, relying for justification on fears of unruly people with uteruses whose reproductive capacity required containment. Eugenics programs had specific effects on people with uteruses including longer recovery from sterilization surgeries like the salpingectomy. The threat of unfit reproduction was grounded in white supremacist fears of race suicide, and eugenics programs capitalized on long-standing legal regimes (including slavery and colonialism) that deny racialized gendered people bodily autonomy.[21]

When outright eugenics became outmoded following World War II and the stalling of the Great Society in the United States, new modes of governance were introduced that continued to draw on the eugenicist imaginary. These new modes of governance, including policies of privatization, deregulation, and market liberalization, exploded into what Mia Mingus, Eli Clare, and others call "the medical industrial complex."[22] In the medical industrial complex, billions of dollars are funneled into the discovery of new diseases and impairments, while pharmaceutical and technological innovations are promised that can rid society of disease and impairment "once and for all." As an outcome of neoliberalism, the medical industrial complex continued the eugenicist project of locating crisis within disabled and mad bodyminds, and again promised social health could be achieved by curing disease and disability. This theorization of the medical industrial complex maps onto what political theorist Giorgio Agamben names the "state of exception" as a mode of liberal governance.[23] According to Agamben, the temporality of neoliberalism justifies the permanently temporary suspension of civil liberties. Similarly, the medical industrial complex's rhetoric of crisis and recovery justifies the curtailment of bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom for populations including mad and disabled people, poor and racialized women, and bodyminds with diverse genders.

However, despite the rehabilitative promise, neoliberal policies of deregulation, privatization, and market liberalization are implicated in creating the very conditions of precarity that exacerbate illness, impairment, and mental insecurity. Over the last three decades of the twentieth century, organized government divestment from urban and rural communities that were segregated by race and class from white suburbs left communities of color and poor communities to rely on themselves for access to education, food, and security. The already flimsy social safety net was systematically dismantled through the end of the twentieth century through privatization and disinvestment. At the same time, growing wealth inequality ground down the middle class by pushing all but the super-rich into competition for scarce resources. It was in this context that Butler wrote *Parable of the Sower*, fictionalizing her portrayal of a multiracial neighborhood forced into extreme self-reliance. The situation has only worsened in the twenty-first century, as the economy rapidly concentrates jobs in low-paying service and gig industries.

These neoliberal governance policies have a particular impact on disabled and mad people, particularly those who are also racialized and gendered. The process of closing or reducing the size of state psychiatric hospitals and institutions for people classified as intellectually/developmentally disabled beginning the 1960s—known as deinstitutionalization—was one of the first acts of privatization in the neoliberal model in the US. Subsequently, the US has created a bifurcated neoliberal system where the minority, typically white and wealthy, disabled people receive care only through private medical insurance or family members, while many more disabled and mad people of color have been criminalized and warehoused in jails and prisons. Even when public funds are invested in care, the neoliberal state has repeatedly refused to invest in treatments and services that would keep people alive, well, and out of institutions, funneling public money into private industries like nursing homes and to the carceral system rather than directly to sick, disabled, and mad people, or to the programs we want, such as in home support.[24] Preventable deaths of high-profile disability activists, such as Carrie Ann Lucas, attest to the tragic consequences of neoliberal governance, which is focused more on cutting costs than supporting life.[25] How many other lives

have been cut short due to the combination of conjured crisis, emphasis on cure, organized neglect, and the displacement of blame onto disabled and mad bodyminds?

In addition to what has now become almost routine, systematic, premature death, neoliberalism has increased vulnerability to disaster, especially in the face of capitalism-induced rapid climate change. From supercharged hurricanes to wildfires entering urban spaces, mass death and injury are the consequence, and disabled and mad bodyminds are at increased risk.[26] As these disasters show, government aid for communities made vulnerable to disasters through neoliberal economic policy is not a realistic expectation. The rolling power shut-offs orchestrated by Pacific Gas & Electric company in northern California in the name of preventing wildfires illustrate that neither local or state governments, nor the private companies granted authority over critical infrastructure, take any responsibility for ensuring the safety of disabled and chronically ill people.[27] Further, neoliberal governance absolves the state from blame, pointing the finger on disabled bodyminds ourselves for any suffering and premature death that results from conditions of precarity.

As "situated knowledge" growing out of the experience of precarity, cripistemologies expose how neoliberal governance simultaneously creates and deflects responsibility for disabling conditions.[28] The perspectives of racialized and gendered disabled bodyminds surviving precarity offers distinctive analysis of how the twin violences of cure and neglect operate under neoliberal governance. When cripistemological texts shift attention from the "broken" bodymind to the disabling structure of neoliberalism, they are capable of undermining the urgency within which it is claimed that crises can be solved by state-led, scientifically driven efforts of cure. Resisting the temptation to counter premature death with calls for increased and expanded state interventions, cripistemologies are positioned to theorize the routes to survival and flourishing within and against neoliberalism. Cripistemologies are forms of what Chela Sandoval names as "oppositional knowledges" that can counter the eugenicist sociotechnical imaginaries of the neoliberal state.[29]

Parable of the Sower: Cripistemology for Survival and Flourishing

Octavia Butler's novel *Parable of the Sower* exemplifies a cripistemological critique of neoliberal governance. Butler has a created a Black femme protagonist with a disabling impairment. Devalued under the terms of neoliberalism due to her impairment, racial status, and gender assignment, this protagonist gains specific knowledge about how to survive disabling precarity. Further, the character critiques the solutions for crisis proffered by neoliberal governance—namely, privatization and deregulation that facilitates medical industrial cure. In *Parable*, the Black feminist cripistemologist protagonist orchestrates the emergence of a collective that offers a powerful alternative to reliance on the eugenicist solutions of the neoliberal state.

Parable follows Lauren Oya Olamina, a teenager living with her family in a walled-off community near Los Angeles in the year 2024. Outside of the neighborhood walls awaits starvation, rape, sexual exploitation, addiction, and murder. Olamina (as she was called

by Butler) lives in a neighborhood that has banded together to survive by rigging up security systems, growing food, collecting water, schooling children, and worshipping together at a makeshift church. When Olamina's family is murdered and the neighborhood burned down, she forges a new destiny. She creates a multiracial chosen family that she encourages to walk from Los Angeles to the far northern part of California, with the promise of building a more intentional community on more secluded land.

Olamina has a fictional impairment known as hyperempathy syndrome, which causes her to physically feel the pain or pleasure of any person she can see. Throughout the novel, she experiences the gunshot wounds, sexual violence, and starvation of others she encounters. Layered on top of Olamina's hyperempathy syndrome are symptoms of what might be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), including symptoms of hypervigilance and insomnia. However, in her context, some of these PTSD symptoms are practical assets. Entering debates about whether Olamina's hyperempathy is a gift or an impairment, Sami Schalk reframes the syndrome as a disability given the specific social, political, and economic context of Olamina's life.[30] As Schalk points out, even the ability to share pleasure becomes twisted in the dystopic future that Butler created for Olamina. Olamina suffers from—and, in several terrifying instances, is completely debilitated by—her nervous system's response to witnessing both pain and pleasure.

One reading of the novel might argue that it is a story about crisis, and consequently, that it inhabits the same temporality as neoliberal governance. Indeed, Butler intended for the novel to depict the interlocking crises of the neoliberal present. Butler sought to imagine where "our current behaviors and unintended problems might take us," honing in on patterns in the United States of extreme wealth inequality, the abjection of low-wage and surplus workers, carceral expansion, disinvestment in social resources, and the effects of human-caused climate change.[31] Of interest to the present essay are Butler's additional concerns about pharmaceutical drug abuse and declining access to life-saving medical treatments. Both trends are effects of the neoliberal medical industrial complex that prioritizes profit over life and health—and the latter trend is a specific crisis for Black women.

Olamina's impairment, for example, is caused by her mother's abuse during pregnancy of a fictional drug called Paracetco, so-called "Einstein powder."[32] Mirroring current real-life conditions facing pregnant Black people, in the novel such pharmaceuticals are apparently the only form of medical care readily accessible, while other needs suffer, including maternal health. This racialized and gendered neoliberal contradiction plays out in the text when, after apparently causing hyperempathy syndrome in her child due to drug use, Olamina's mother dies during childbirth. In 1993, when *Parable* was published, the number of pregnancy-related deaths had already jumped to 11.1 per 100,000 live births from a low of 7.2 in 1987; the number steadily climbed to 17.3 in 2017.[33] Olamina's mother's death represents the specifically racialized dimension of this problem, as non-Hispanic Black women experienced a pregnancy-related mortality rate that was almost three times that of non-Hispanic white women between the years of 2014 and 2017. A participatory research justice study of Black women's maternal health concluded that numerous barriers have been erected that prevent Black women from accessing prenatal care, including "inadequate health insurance coverage," "distrust of and poor treatment by prenatal care providers," "structural inequities" that produce

stress that contribute to poor health outcomes, and "institutional budget constraints" that prevent providers from offering adequate care.[34] Each of these trends, I argue, can be directly attributed to the ramped up neoliberalization of medical care in the United States over the past thirty years.

Common responses to these disabling conditions are either to cling to the neoliberal promise of recovery through more privatization and deregulation leading to market solutions, or to demand a return of government investment in the social safety net. *Parable* rejects both the neoliberal and liberal impulses, enacting a cripistemologically grounded critique that emphatically resists the assumption that recovery will come through either more advanced capitalism or state interventions. In the case of market solutions, Butler imagines the return of an indentured servitude in a kind of company town, where able-bodied individuals forfeit their freedom to the corporation in exchange for shelter, food, and protection from outside violence. In this extreme version of privatization, it is as if the state does not exist. Consequently, all human value is reduced to the ability to work, a status that Olamina recognizes as excluding disabled bodyminds like hers.

Butler also reminds us that under neoliberalism, the state is incentivized and disciplined into accelerating its collusion with capital, producing racialized, gendered, and disabled life as "surplus" through routine forms of governance.[35] Early in the novel, Butler depicts the election of Charles Morpeth Donner as President of the United States. Exemplifying neoliberal logic by insisting on operating the government like a business, Donner's proposal for restoring the economy and "putting people back to work" is to dismantle labor protections and environmental regulations.[36] Olamina wonders, "And what about those suspended laws? Will it be legal to poison, mutilate, or infect people—as long as you provide them with food, water, and space to die?"[37] Identifying how the disablement of citizens occurs in the name of economic profit, Olamina exposes the fantasy of recovery to something called normal, organized through the mode of neoliberal governance, as a farce and a form of what Lauren Berlant calls "cruel optimism."[38]

Yet, exceeding mere critique of the interlocking crises of the neoliberal present, the novel also presents alternative possible futures for those who manage to survive neoliberal catastrophe. One other possible future emerges through collective, community-based emergency planning spearheaded by the visionary foresight of Olamina. Butler's protagonist anticipates the need to prepare materially, psychically, and spiritually for the coming disaster, challenging her parents and other adults who cling to a restoration of normality. Olamina's differences from her family and community, differences which include but are not limited to her impairment and her unorthodox spiritual vision, force her to grapple with the inadequacy of the status quo for her survival.

Olamina's impairment has lent her a pessimistic pragmatism forged through the need to make difficult decisions in order to survive through the bouts of sudden and debilitating pain that her impairment brings. Perhaps it is due to these attributes, gained through impairment, that young Olamina has the ability to push past the fantasy of normalcy in order to forge an alternative plan for survival. While her father and other adults in the community worked to shore up the fences that surround the neighborhood in a desperate bid to maintain the status quo, Olamina secretly assembled an emergency kit, saved cash, and studied edible wild foods. Olamina's preparations ultimately save her

life after the neighborhood is attacked, and she is forced to flee alone on foot. Olamina's anticipation of the failure of the status quo is cripistemological and serves as a vital model of emergency preparedness for crip collectivities facing neoliberal disasters. This is a form of planning based on the crip of color knowledge that, especially in times of crisis, there may not be any government aid to call upon. Olamina's example is an invitation to pack emergency kits and make collective disaster evacuation plans; to vision with our communities about mutual aid and self-sufficiency; to learn to grow food, harvest wild food, and make medicine; and to craft ethics and principles that can guide our collective decision-making outside and beyond the state. Although categorized under the genre of speculative fiction or science fiction, the text provides an urgent example for developing practical plans to survive the precarious conditions of the neoliberal present.

Powerfully, the novel moves beyond strategizing for crip survival to imagining what Alison Kafer calls "feminist, queer, crip" futures; futures that have until now largely been absent from eugenicist and neoliberal sociotechnical imaginaries.[39] Similarly, the Sins Invalid performing arts collective of queer and trans disabled people of color articulates "disability justice" as a demand for more than the mere survival of disabled and mad people.[40] While critique offers the barest minimum necessary for the survival of those devalued under neoliberalism, disability justice also demands a practice of imagining possible futures where queer and trans disabled and mad people of color can "flourish," in Sins Invalid collective member's Patty Berne's terms.[41]

Parable imagines possible futures for those who have been disabled and made mad by the precarious conditions of neoliberalism. The novel depicts more than mere crip survival, the story imagines crip flourishing through the emergence of the collective. Once Olamina is forced from her domestic space and left with virtually nothing, she cultivates alternative public arrangements of care and intimacy, building a chosen family and community. Butler provides the following description of this collective emergence:

> When Olamina's birth community is destroyed, she begins to build another. She doesn't know at first that that's what she's doing, and she's afraid—terrified—of potentially dangerous strangers. But she learns to reach out in spite of her fear, to choose the best people she can find and bring them together. With her acceptance of Earthseed, she relinquishes hope for supernatural help . . . She believes that our only dependable help must come from ourselves and from one another.[42]

Family and community are brought together through Olamina's visionary creation of an unorthodox spiritual tradition that she calls Earthseed. Earthseed grows into a multiracial and multigenerational community of people who have been impaired, traumatized, and dispossessed by the catastrophe of neoliberal capitalism and abandoned by the neoliberal state. Together Earthseed as an intentional community defies relegation to tragedy, creating possible futures for themselves through interdependence and mutual aid.

The Earthseed imaginary and the possible futures they create challenge eugenicist strands within neoliberal narratives. As I have discussed, neoliberalism structurally creates disabling conditions through privatization and deregulation, and then continues the eugenicist tradition of displacing responsibility for structural precarity onto surplus

disabled and mad bodyminds. The Earthseed community resists this process of disablement, by collectively preparing for changing conditions, building capacity to adapt to changing conditions, and indeed, learning how to "shape" inevitable change. Through her depiction of Earthseed, Butler depicts how building collective crip resilience offers a path for surviving within neoliberalist precarity and creating flourishing futures for those that would otherwise be devalued under the neoliberal status quo.

Conclusion: Speculative Fiction and Real-World Collectivity

I have argued that as a cripistemological fiction, Octavia Butler's 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower* imagines the possibilities for crip flourishing through collective emergence within and against neoliberal precarity. While this parable about crip life beyond the state is generative, I recognize that it is difficult to imagine how to meet the need for modern technologies to keep disabled and mad people alive outside of the market and state models. Currently, the state seems like the best—although not necessarily the only—way to enforce access and to distribute life-saving services and technologies.[43] It may therefore seem counterintuitive to conclude that a future of crip thriving and flourishing is only possible through a critical perspective of neoliberal modes of state governance. Yet without devoting energies to creating lifesaving services and technologies beyond the state apparatus, disabled and mad people will be stuck in an endless precarious neoliberal loop of crisis, cure, neglect, and scapegoating. The disaster that opens *Parable* predicts that the neoliberal state is always already imploding under the weight of problems it helped to create, including urban divestment, wealth inequality, and climate change. As the real-life versions of similar disasters have demonstrated, the most acute effect of neoliberal precarity is on racialized communities, on women and gender diverse people within those communities, and on disabled and mad people.[44] The need to think outside the state is not just speculation—racialized and gendered crip communities are always necessarily creating their own terms of survival and developing communities of flourishing beyond the neoliberal state.[45]

Such community has emerged among readers of *Parable*. Readers and scholars of Butler gather digitally, physically, and intellectually, through the creation of such infrastructures as Wildseeds: New Orleans Octavia Butler Emergent Strategy Collective (co-founded by Desiree Evans and Soraya Jean-Louis McElroy), Emergent Strategy Ideation Institute (founded by adrienne maree brown), and the Octavia Butler Legacy Network (founded by Ayana A.H. Jamieson).[46] In these communities, Butler's work is treated as a pedagogical, at times sacred, text containing much needed wisdom about survival, healing, and creating a future where communities of color, women, and gender diverse people can flourish. These communities are an example of the kinds of collective emergence that can be scaled up from the imaginary of speculative fiction into the level of the material world.

If, as I join others in insisting, Butler's fiction is a cripistemological text, then *Parable* contains knowledge precisely for developing networks of mutual aid through which crip and mad people, specifically, can survive and flourish.[47] *Parable* offers a critique of neoliberalism, an essential imaginary of "feminist, queer, crip" "flourishing" (in Kafer's

and Berne's terms), and, finally, operates as a foundation for real-life community building, as Butler's readers and scholars connect digitally and in person.[48] This last is an example of putting speculative fiction as theory into "practice" in a whole new way. Disabled and mad people in the real world currently face the kinds of rapid climate change catastrophe and abandonment by the neoliberal state presciently imagined by Octavia Butler in *Parable of the Sower*. Collective crip emergence as praxis, facilitated through the gathering of speculative fiction readers, is an urgent and timely practice for realizing futures for crip and mad people.

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1986—The Marxist Disciplining of the Cultural Studies Project

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ABSTRACT Since its infancy, the pluralistic tendencies of the cultural studies project denied methodological and procedural consistency and resisted any disciplining of cultural studies as an attempt at authoritarian policing. Over the course of the 1980s, cultural studies continued to spread beyond the United Kingdom to Australia and the United States, initially, and the rest of the world soon thereafter. Movements towards the bridging of the longstanding divisions between fact and interpretation—between the social sciences and the humanities—under the sign of a principled approach to cultural democracy saw the Althusserian Marxism characteristic of earlier cultural studies scholarship expanded by way of a critical re/engagement of the works of Gramsci. This period of ideological critique allowed for a bold intellectual, political commitment to the re/conceptualization of culture as a site of class struggle, hegemonic formation, and structural signification. Particularly, the year 1986 saw major strides in this direction with the publication of monumental manuscripts by Stuart Hall, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe.

KEYWORDS 1986, Althusserian Marxism, cultural studies, disciplinarity, Marxism

Introduction

The pluralistic tendencies of the cultural studies project have long denied methodological and procedural consistency, resisting any disciplining as an attempt at authoritarian policing. As cultural studies continued to spread beyond the United Kingdom over the course of the 1980s, movements towards the bridging of the longstanding divisions between the social sciences and the humanities—under the sign of a principled approach to cultural democracy—saw the Althusserian Marxism characteristic of earlier cultural studies scholarship expanded by way of a critical re/engagement of the works of Gramsci. This period of ideological critique allowed for a bold intellectual, political commitment to the re/conceptualization of culture as a site of class struggle, hegemonic formation, and structural signification. To understand the ways in which the cultural studies project continued to spread outside the United Kingdom over the course of the 1980s and the ways in which "cultural studies circulated among scholars in varying disciplines while still in its infancy," it is essential to chronicle the development and allure of the project's (lack of) tenets, definitions, and characteristics.[1] Particularly, the year 1986 saw major strides in this direction with the publication of monumental manuscripts by Stuart Hall, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe.

In this article, I explicate the ways in which the sub/cultural shifts following the end of the Second World War would inspire a legitimated and disciplined cultural studies, fueled by the international expansion of cultural studies scholarship and its subsequent influx of alternative perspectives and modes of analysis over the course of the 1970s and 1980s.

Next, I highlight the ways in which these shifts encouraged cultural studies scholars to deploy categorical devices from across the social sciences, productively drawing out contradictions among these approaches with constant vigilance over their own agendas and methodologies. I explore the ways in which these processes of exploration were amplified by the emergence of a critical cultural studies in the wake of the incorporation of the British tradition of cultural studies into the field of American mass communication studies in the early 1980s, ushering in a critical paradigm that would come to a head over the course of the next few years, crowned by major publications in 1986. Finally, I argue that the theoretical implications of this Gramscian neo-Marxist symbiosis of cultural studies reverberate until the present day.

Cultural Studies and the Imbrication of Power and Subjectivity

Of course, cultural studies did not come into being in a vacuum, and we cannot trace its origins to a singular individual or a single group of scholars. Nevertheless, much may be gained from closely considering the careers of Stuart Hall, Richard Hoggart, and Raymond Williams. Based in the United Kingdom after the Second World War, these Leftist intellectuals would seek to understand the various intersections of class and nation at the levels of lived experience and social structure. They were inspired by the sub/cultural shifts following the end of the Second World War, and from them they gained an interdisciplinary attachment to culture and the popular. By the mid-1950s, universities across the United Kingdom were expanding their admission processes beyond considerations of class, wealth, and ancestry, and made meaningful strides towards inclusion based on talent and ability. This movement of reformation would continue into the 1960s and 1970s, strengthened by the establishment of universities in academically underserved communities across the country and the broader Western world.

Serving as professor of English at Birmingham University between 1962 and 1973, Hoggart founded the institution's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in 1964. This period of growth, popularity, and prosperity would become the central impetus behind the adolescence of cultural studies, marking the project as a revolutionary curricular alternative to the traditional humanities and social science disciplines. Recognizing the importance of an interdisciplinary curriculum, early cultural studies scholars in the United Kingdom opened the possibility of developing a new kind of pedagogy. It is here that a commitment to interdisciplinarity begins to be articulated more explicitly.

As Williams recognized, these roots of the interdisciplinary project of cultural studies were defined not by particular problems or subject matters, but rather by a conceptualization of fields of academic specialization remaining in constant dialogue with intellectual and practical interests beyond themselves.[2] Williams moved against the idealist conceptions of culture as a march towards perfection, measured by universal values basic to the human condition, instead proposing scholars focus on the ways of life and shared values of particular communities at particular times.[3] This position is not one of anti-disciplinarity, even in its insistence on explicating the limits and incompleteness of disciplinary forms of knowledge and their historical formation.[4] Williams argued—as did Hoggart—that the actuality of regional, class-based experiences was principally excluded.

Later, Appadurai furthered the research agendas of Hoggart and Williams.[5] Whereas the latter recognized the disciplinary limits of established academic departments and their cultures, Appadurai is able to complement these critiques with a connection between the two "main senses" of disciplinarity—"(a) care, cultivation, habit and (b) field, method, subject matter."[6] Conceptualizing disciplines as sites to be won by new cohorts of persons from diverse backgrounds, Appadurai posits as a solution to the incompleteness of the research school the inclusion of the minoritarian as part and parcel of an academic education, in the form of "area studies along with anything that might count as 'minors,' 'minorities,' and 'minor literatures.'"[7] Particularly, Appadurai recognized the ongoing debates regarding cultural studies as revealing an "overdetermined landscape of anxieties," defined—tongue firmly placed in cheek—as an "omnibus characterization about its 'theory' (too French), its topics (too popular), its style (too glitzy), its jargon (too hybrid), its politics (too postcolonial), its constituency (too multicultural)."[8] Though ultimately sarcastic in tone, Appadurai nevertheless indicates clearly the roots of the cultural studies project's continued caricature by its opponents. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, the integration of the cultural studies project into the fields of communication and media studies was fundamentally colored by a certain politics of legitimation.

As Hall later argued, the foundational works of the CCCS produced "no single, unproblematic definition of culture."[9] The Centre operated with a propensity to avoid offering up any definitive definition or methodologically suggestive view of what constitutes culture, instead functioning as a convergence of interests. Grossberg et al. similarly argued that there can be no final paradigm for the field of cultural studies, as the flexibility of its assumptions and procedures allows for an analytical freedom—a methodological bricolage—with which scholars may pivot and respond to the ever in-flux complexities of cultural life.[10] As the authors note, "cultural studies has no guarantees about what questions are important to ask within given contexts or how to answer them; hence no methodology can be privileged or even temporarily employed with total security and confidence, yet none can be eliminated out of hand."[11] This process of methodological bricolage would explode over the course of the 1980s, fueled by the international expansion of cultural studies scholarship and its subsequent influx of alternative perspectives and modes of analysis.

The pervasive determination to not define its central object has led to a pluralistic tendency fundamental to the cultural studies project. For those turning to cultural studies scholarship to free themselves from the rigors and restrictions of common disciplinary structures, this tendency has been heralded as the defining, most beneficial aspect of the project. For these cultural studies scholars, any disciplining of cultural studies was seen as an attempt at authoritarian policing and, thus, as antithetical to the character of cultural studies work. Alternatively, the reluctance to defining its central object of study has denied the cultural studies project methodological and procedural consistency. As cultural studies scholarship is authorized, implicitly or explicitly, to take many forms, a certain sense of cohesion is lost. As the cultural studies project became synonymous with intellectual, scholarly freedom and liberation, its defiance of definition became synonymous with its non-disciplinary politics. However, this need not be a zero-sum situation—historically, the strongest cultural studies scholarship has worked through the imbrication of power and subjectivity at all points on the cultural continuum.[12] A synthesis of the two approaches allows the bridging of the longstanding divisions between fact and interpretation—between the social sciences and the humanities—under the sign of a principled approach to cultural democracy.

Particularly, movements towards such synthesis, towards such a legitimated and disciplined cultural studies, characterized the project's development in the mid-1980s, as the Althusserian Marxism characteristic of earlier CCCS scholarship was expanded by way of a critical re/engagement of the works of Gramsci. As Hall argues, the specificity of cultural studies scholarship arises in its contingent location, its flexible positions, and its self-reflexivity.[13] The displacement of procedural or methodological issues onto predominantly thematic concerns has transformed the cultural studies project into a topical enterprise.[14] All this is not to say that the cultural studies project requires—or would even necessarily benefit from—establishing more rigorous, internally consistent protocols and procedures. Rather, scholars must come to recognize that many of the kinds of analysis accepted or lauded in contemporary cultural studies scholarship have proceeded on the narrow-minded assumption that addressing a certain set of thematically construed cultural issues equates to meaningful political analysis and intervention. Such scholarship is not to be construed as an automatic, embedded form of engagement. Major strides towards this process of synthesis were made over the course of the 1980s, culminating in major publications in the year 1986.

Setting the Scene for the Marxist Disciplining of Cultural Studies

To account for the simultaneity of (marginalized) subcultural members' status as consumers of commodities, producers of objects of resistance, and inspirations for recommodified appropriations of these objects, cultural studies scholarship would turn to socioeconomic analysis via critical political economy, concerned with structures of the economy and structures of meaning. These concerns need not be mutually exclusive—historically, the strongest critical political economy studies and the strongest cultural studies scholarship have worked through the imbrication of power and subjectivity at all points on the cultural continuum. To this end, Grossberg reflected on cultural studies providing a dynamic way of "politicizing theory and theorizing politics."[15] Combining abstraction and grounded analysis, over the course of the 1980s cultural studies scholars would come to focus on the contradictions of organizational structures, their articulations with everyday living and textuality, and their intrication with the polity and economy. These scholars refused any bifurcation that opposes the study of production and consumption, or fails to address such overlapping axes of subjectification as class, race, nation, and gender.

The Marxist disciplining of cultural studies

Whilst the cultural studies project was not necessarily founded on an engagement with Marxist thought, it would rise to the fore during its earlier years. Particularly, the field's early interest in ideology under the influence of the work of Althusser was part of a broader, eclectic experimentation with theoretical tools. Over the course of the 1980s, Hall's liberal, selective reading of Gramsci brought Marxist thought to the forefront of the project.[16] Simultaneously, Laclau & Mouffe's reading of Gramsci was decidedly anti-Marxist.[17] Hugely influential in the American cultural studies project, the authors' work moved strongly against the perceived intractable essentialism of Marxism.

The most commonly voiced objections to the engagement with Marxist theory in cultural studies scholarship problematize its perceived reductivism and economical determinism, which is to preclude any meaningful engagement with other forms of subjectivity, such as race, nationality, and gender. This problematization, in itself, is reductionist, as Marxist theory and analysis allows more than a singular approach to the questions of determinations within the processes of culture. The lack of cultural studies scholarship engaging with levels of over/determination within cultural life has authorized the treatment of certain thematically selected cultural elements in relative isolation from each other—or rather, as discrete entities whose contextual relations do not privilege their mode of production.[18] Extended to their logical end, such absences authorized a specific, preferred reading of cultural objects and events as, essentially, texts with no necessary reference to the place or conditions of their productions. In the mid-1980s, a renewed interest in Marxist thought worked to reconsider these absences in cultural studies scholarship, encouraging novel conceptualizations of power, ideology, and hegemony at the CCCS—and beyond.

From its earliest beginnings in the 1960s, the cultural studies project has been continuously concerned with questions of power, and through the construct of hegemony analysts have sought to explicate its machinations. Cultural studies scholarship as practiced at the CCCS was largely conducted within the context of an Althusserian Marxism, at its core motivated by the phenomenon of social class and "the rediscovery of ideology."[19] Building upon the neo-Weberian notion of class popularized by a generation of British sociologists writing during the 1950s, subsequent generations of scholars would turn to Marx in their explorations of popular, social working class culture, paying particular mind to the class power on display in trade unions and on factory floors.[20]

The power-as-hegemony position would continue to gain momentum throughout the 1970s, moving its focus increasingly away from labor and the economy towards ideology and culture. Scholars would come to recognize power as not solely economic, but also cultural. Capitalist state power could not be conceptualized solely as coercive and dominating—it was to be understood as working through internalized consent, as a product of ideology. Forwarding the maxim that the media did not reflect—but rather construct—reality, scholars at the CCCS (as well as those in its orbit) would come to strongly condemn positivistic traditions in media studies for neglecting any theorization of power, and for erroneously presuming the media to organically facilitate an integral consensus. These theoretical contributions would formally introduce to the cultural studies project a neo-Marxist framework built upon a specific, radical ideological critique. Resultantly, this period of ideological critique over the course of the 1980s allowed for the combination of the diverse theoretical perspectives of Althusser and Gramsci, indicating a bold intellectual, political commitment to the re/conceptualization of culture as a site of class struggle, hegemonic formation, and structural signification.[21]

These movements of synthesis coincided with the spread of the cultural studies project beyond the United Kingdom to Australia and the United States, initially, and the rest of the world soon thereafter. As cultural studies scholarship gained a foothold across international and disciplinary boundaries, the project would significantly adapt, evolve, and grow throughout the 1980s. Instrumental in this process of evolution was a 1983 special issue of the *Journal of Communication*, "Ferment in the Field."[22]. *Journal of Communication* 33, no. 3 (1983).]

"Ferment in the Field" and Critical Cultural Studies

In 1983, the "Ferment in the Field" special issue of the *Journal of Communication* would serve as an important forum for the discussion of the various epistemological forces shaping mass communication research in the United States. Explicitly questioning the legacies of positivism and neo/behaviorism fundamental to a significant part of American mass communication scholarship since the Second World War, the scholars' collected works offered an essential alternative paradigm. This paradigm would come to be known as critical theory.

The critical theory paradigm would meaningfully engage the challenge of critical Marxist-oriented media research, predominantly concerned with questions of power and control. This scholarship was translated from European Marxism[23]—more specifically, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, whose consideration of political economy "requires that there be criticism of the contradictory aspects of the phenomena in their systems context."[24] Consequently, "Ferment" would prove a locus of an intellectual, historical encounter between an American tradition of mass communication scholarship anchored by the social and political spirit of liberal pluralism and pragmatism, and European traditions marked by a clear, recent history of fascism, fragmentation, and displacement. This recent history placed purveying considerations of mass media as upholding democratic order and establishing consensus under radical suspicion. "Ferment" thus, served as more than a challenge to the traditions of American mass communication research—it served as a critique of American nationalism.

To understand the ways in which the theories and methodologies of cultural studies run through the special issue,[25] much may be gained from exploring the representative research questions in American mass communication research since the 1940s vis-à-vis those in the alternative paradigm originating in the 1960s from Europe and the United Kingdom. The special issue examined a wide range of research queries underlying the American mass communication tradition, such as the tradition's preoccupation with the relationship between communication and the organizing process of community;[26] the participation and affective influence of mass communication on the social reality of modernization in the United States;[27] individuals' stimulation by and utilization of mass communication to maintain their standing as a functioning member of society;[28] and the long-term effects of the media market on audiences and society.[29]

As the scholarship comprising "Ferment" underlines, the American mass communication tradition had become a social-scientific enterprise shaped by emerging functionalist, practical research objectives to measure media effects, which would result in both a professionalization of mass communication research, as well as a positivist sociological understanding of mass media. Of course, that is not to say that the administrative version of mass communication research conducted in the United States—as an alternative to which the critical theory paradigm was proposed—did not at all acknowledge questions of power and control. Rather, media criticism was largely conceptualized as a methodological issue—especially from the 1940s until the 1960s—which "was bound to threaten creative or innovative modes of inquiry" as a behavioral scientific orientation became both the source and result of inquiry.[30]

Furthermore, the impact of members of the Frankfurt School emigrating from Nazi Germany to the United States in the 1940s must not be neglected, for they introduced the German *Sozialforschung* to the American social science research tradition. With a decidedly Marxist formulation of theory, these scholars' primary challenge of American social scientific research was to the prevalent abstracted empiricism of "the assiduous collecting of facts … the gathering of great masses of detail in connection with problems."[31] This underlined the importance of considering the historical character of mass culture and problematized the potential division between the individualistic values of mass culture consumption vis-à-vis sociopolitical realities.

Influenced by the critical tradition of the Frankfurt School, essential works in communication studies were prompted to explore the desirability of the industrialization of mass media—marked by concentrated ownership and integration—for American society.[32] Additionally, scholars questioned the emancipatory potential of public communication reconceptualized as commercial culture, as well as a shared arena of public participation and deliberation—a reconceptualization necessitated by the historical experience of totalitarianism.[33] This reconfiguration of mass communication/media studies by critical theory elevated the theoretical discourse in the United States by pressing communication scholars to confront the undemocratic character of mass culture, and—by extension—to acknowledge and overcome the possible collusion of research with the dominant political and economic system.

Transforming traditionalist American mass communication research to a critical media studies demanded the radical critiquing of positivist philosophy, neo-behavioral social theory, and society itself. In this endeavor, "Ferment" captured the pointed philosophical considerations of the Frankfurt School, ushering in a critical neo-Marxist paradigm for the fields of communication and media studies that would come to a head over the course of the next few years.

Critical Cultural Studies—1986

"Ferment" helped facilitate the incorporation of the British tradition of cultural studies into the field of American mass communication studies, by way of the former's intellectual relationship with critical theory. However, it is essential to recognize that the traditions of the British cultural studies project and the Frankfurt School did not necessarily conduct neo-Marxist scholarship in analogous ways. Rather, cultural studies scholars would approach the attention given to textual matters and audience pleasure from a neo-Marxist angle, whereas scholars associated with the Frankfurt School would apply neo-Marxist theorizations to the production apparatus of the media within the study of political economy.

Nevertheless, the integration of cultural studies into the field of mass communication studies would be marked by a distinct, emerging construction of cultural studies in the image of American communication studies, and—more specifically—in the crude, mechanistic image of a production-text-consumption process. Influentially, Johnson's framework for a cultural studies approach to media and communication employed a model of cultural studies resembling the trichotomous focus of conventional communication studies theory on the separate dimensions of production, textuality, and reception.[34] Resultantly, the broader project of cultural studies entered into media studies in the United

States by way of a reductivism of culture to communication.[35] This integration of cultural studies into the fields of communication and media studies urged a Gramscian responsiveness to the historical conditions and mechanisms of social power. These theories of ideology and hegemony were not intended to supplant theories of culture and communication—rather, they would allow for the erection of a framework on which a broader historicized articulation of mass communication and media effects could be built. However, the radical equation of culture with ideology by cultural studies scholars in the fields of communication and media studies would be critiqued as reductionist by those scholars unconvinced by their indiscriminating use of critical frameworks.[36]

Ultimately, in 1985, Carey argued that overcoming resistance to critiques of ideological reductivism requires the potential possibility of a productive comparative dialogue between British and American brands of cultural studies, as the impact and continued utility of the original tradition of American cultural studies was not fully recognized and appreciated by contemporary, post-positivist scholars.[37] The structural humanism common to British and American cultural studies warrants far greater recognition than it received during the 1970s and early 1980s, as scholars had yet to re/imagine this commonality as an indication of symbiosis. As Carey argued, the radical equation of culture with ideology within vast areas of cultural studies scholarship was reductionist, drawing major critiques to the project as painting with too broad a critical brush. In this assessment, Carey connects such forms of ideological critique with a certain pessimistic impulse of the cultural studies project. Whereas culture is phenomenologically diverse in essence and effects, the ideological critique of culture explicates the weakened role of coercion in contemporary life, whilst the description of the ideological state apparatus points to the displacement of a repressive state apparatus.

As one of the first communication scholars to seriously integrate the intellectual legacies of British cultural studies to an American context, Carey's contempt for communication scholarship conducted in the mode of positivistic science would lead him to herald cultural studies as an alternative paradigm.[38] Heeding Carey's call, the year 1986 saw major strides in this direction with the publication of monumental manuscripts by Stuart Hall, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe.

Gramscian Neo-Marxism and the Symbiosis of Cultural Studies

Moving away from the project's earlier interest in ideology under the influence of the work of Althusser as part of a broader, eclectic experimentation with theoretical tools, Hall's[39] and Laclau & Mouffe's[40] readings of Gramsci brought a greater responsiveness to the historical conditions and mechanisms of social power to the forefront of the project.

As Hall posited, the works of Gramsci do not offer a general social science applicable to the analysis of social phenomena across a wide comparative range of historical societies. Rather, their potential contribution is more limited; it is "sophisticating" rather than constructive.[41] Operating within the Marxist paradigm, Gramsci has extensively revised and sophisticated aspects of the Marxist theoretical framework, Hall argued, increasing its relevance to contemporary social relations. Consequently, Gramsci's work has a direct bearing on the question of the adequacy of contemporary social theories, as his most important theoretical contributions function in "complexifying existing theories and

problems." Particularly, Hall sought to facilitate "a more sophisticated examination of the hitherto poorly elucidated phenomena of racism and to examine the adequacy of the theoretical formulations, paradigms and interpretive schemes in the social and human sciences…with respect to intolerance and racism and in relation to the complexity of problems they pose."[42]

Gramsci was not a general theorist, defying academic classification. Rather, his theoretical works developed in natural tandem with his social and historical context with the explicit intent of informing political practice, not an abstract academic purpose. Gramsci's theoretical contribution are to be read as refinements, revisions, and advances to Marxist theory. They are to be applied to novel historical conditions, related to developments in society which Marx could not have anticipated, yet without which Marxist theory cannot meaningfully be applied to complex, contemporary social phenomena. Hall underlined that theories and concepts operate at varying levels of abstraction.[43] Consequently, these levels of abstraction are not to be misread, as "we expose ourselves to serious error when we attempt to 'read off' concepts which were designed to operate at a high level of abstraction as if they automatically produced the same theoretical effects when translated to another, more concrete, 'lower' level of operation."[44]

According to Hall, Gramsci understood fundamental Marxist concepts—indicating the essential processes organizing and structuring the capitalist mode of production at any stage of its historical development—as introduced at the most general level of abstraction. As soon as these concepts are applied to particular societies at specific stages in the development of capitalism, scholars are to move from mode of production to a lower, more concrete, level of application. Therefore, whenever Gramsci moves from the general terrain of Marx's conceptualizations to specific historical conjunctures, the author does not cease to work within their field of reference, nor does he forget or neglect the critical element of the economic foundations of society and its relations—rather, Gramsci contributes to "the much-neglected areas of conjunctural analysis, politics, ideology and the state."[45] Gramsci did rage against the economic reductionism and positivist objectivism common in certain forms of traditional Marxism. He raged against those falsely positivistic models by social scientists positing the laws of social and historical development as modelled directly on the objectivity of the laws governing the natural scientific world. Such a shift in direction within the terrain of Marxism, Hall argued, would come to define Gramsci's contributions to Marxist theory.

Following a trajectory distinctly different from Hall's, Laclau argued adamantly against the taxonomic class reductions pervasive in Marxist scholarship, problematizing the facile paradigms of (perceived) bourgeois social scientists.[46]

After the Second World War, scholars across Europe and the Americas worked to reconceptualize Marxist theory, challenging both "official Marxism" and the contemporary, bourgeois traditions of the social sciences.[47] Over the course of four essays, Laclau tackles four major problems of Marxist theory through a critical review of various recent studies' conceptualizations and theorizations. Particularly, Laclau touches on the capitalist development of Latin America, the bourgeois state, the nature of fascism, and the nature of populism. Most prominently, Laclau's essay on fascism seeks to rekindle the theoretical discussion of the classed origins of fascism. Contemporary Marxist analysis, he argues, has made redundant "the complexity of fascism and [has] reduced it to a single contradiction: that existing between monopoly capital and the rest of society."[48]

As Laclau noted, "theoretical practice has been greatly hindered by the connotative articulation of concepts at the level of common-sense discourse and their rationalist articulation into essential paradigms."[49] In its stead, Laclau called for "an increasingly theoretical formalization of Marxist categories,"[50] moving emphatically against the "process of pronouncing the class belonging to elements of concrete ideologies,"[51] and arguing that the reflexive class reductionism of Marxist scholarship has overlooked the critical insights of the work of Arendt—"It was not interpellations as a class but interpellations as 'people' which dominated fascist political discourse."[52]

As Laclau underlines, "fascism, far from being the typical ideological expression of the most conservative and reactionary sectors of the dominant class was, on the contrary, one of the possible ways of articulation of popular-democratic interpellations into political discourse."[53] Marxist analysis and political practice, thus, failed to recognize the simultaneous struggle of classes on separate ideological plains—as a class, and as a people. For example, for the *petit bourgeoisie*—the middle classes whose conduct is a critical component of gaining an understanding of fascism—"identity as the people plays a much more important role than identity as a class."[54] Nevertheless, the ideologies of such a group are too diffused to "organize its own discourse and can only exist within the ideological discourse of the bourgeoisie or the proletariat."[55]

Due to the political line imposed on it by traditional Marxists and the theoretical reductionism of its leadership, Laclau argues, the working class has come to function as a class barrier, yielding the "arena of popular-democratic struggle" to the "monopoly fraction" of the petit bourgeoisie.[56] Revolutionary confrontation requires the ideology of the working class to be able to present itself as an heir apparent to national tradition—it requires an anti-capitalist struggle to become the culmination of the democratic struggles of the entire society over its dominant bloc. As an essential contribution, Laclau explicates the ways in which popular democratic interpellations do not share a necessary class belonging, even as democratic struggle is fundamentally dominated by class struggle.

During the rise of fascism in Laclau's recent history, the working class failed to articulate itself as a hegemonic popular alternative to the dominant petit/bourgeoisie. Rather, the working class isolated itself ideologically and politically, allowing its silencing and neutralization by its dominant bloc. As Laclau argues, if the working class cannot resist the simultaneous threats of class sectarianism and social-democratic opportunism, it will remain unable to develop "hegemony over the remaining popular sectors."[57] To this end, Laclau rejects the sterile formalism of past Marxist theory and practice, and posits a "theory of the specific autonomy of popular democratic interpellations" as an absolute necessity.[58]

Expanding upon this scholarship, Laclau & Mouffe seek to "identify the discursive conditions for the emergence of a collective action, direction towards struggling against inequalities and challenging the relations of subordination."[59] Arguing that those in a subordinate subjective position are not oppressed until externally transformed, the authors recognized this moment as the one in which social movements mutate into "conflictual moments."[60] Consequently, those movements towards equality and equivalence are reliant on opening up new spaces for "social conflictuality." The authors recognized the works of Gramsci as the starting point for their own work—as well as for any contemporary social revolutionary—as Gramsci gave mature expression to hegemony by conceptualizing ideology as a form of materiality, rather than false consciousness, which cannot be reduced to a matter of class. Nevertheless, Laclau & Mouffe perceived Gramsci's work as

fundamentally limited in its theorization of a core proletarian will. As the plurality of forces in modern society are in some articulated relation, the authors used a development of the notion of over-determination to renounce the conceptualization of society as the unity of Gramsci's various elements—"The multiformity of the social cannot be apprehended through a system of mediations, nor the 'social order' understood as an underlying principle," as society has no intrinsic essence.[61]

To this end, Laclau & Mouffe posited a theory of social movements, which sought to explicate the types of action whose objectives are the transformation of a social relation constructing a subject in a relation of subordination. Moving against the humanist Marxist conceptualizations of the working class as the agent of any socialist transition, the authors explored the ways in which capitalism maintains power through hegemony and explicated the necessity of socialist efforts to exist on this plain of hegemony. As the authors note, "left-wing thought today stands at a crossroads. The 'evident truths' of the past . . . have been seriously challenged by an avalanche of historical mutations which have riven the ground on which those truths were constituted." The plural and multifarious character of contemporary social struggles—alongside their theoretical implications—have undermined foundationalist Marxism. Consequently, they endeavored to initiate a paradigmatic shift by issuing a critique of class-based essentialism to reverberate throughout the entirety of Marxist theory.

By placing an accent on hegemony, the authors moved against all forms of reductionism—especially the economism of traditional Marxism. By extension, the authors abandon, as a nexus of analysis, the premise of society as a sutured, self-defined totality. "Society" cannot be a valid object of discourse as there is "no single underlying principle fixing—and hence constituting—the whole field of differences." To gain such contours, society requires aformulation and establishment of hegemonic political relationship—a kind of political articulation. By this logic, if politics is a matter of hegemonic articulation, the relationship between politics and economics cannot be permanently fixed or stabilized, must be understood as dependent on circumstances and prevailing articulatory practices: "the economic is and is not present in the political and vice versa; the relation is not one of literal differentiations but of unstable analogies between the two terms."[62]

Nevertheless, Laclau & Mouffe warned that a mere dismantling of totality readily conjures up the peril of "a new form of fixity," on the level of "decentered subject positions."[63] Consequently, a "logic of detotalization" cannot simply affirm "the separation of different struggles and demands," just as "articulation" cannot purely be conceived as "the linkage of dissimilar and fully constituted elements."[64]

In 1986, Hall's and Laclau & Mouffe's divergent engagements with Gramscian intellectual tradition illustrate the processes of productive comparative symbiosis between British and American brands of cultural studies need not necessarily coalesce into a singular Gramscian tradition. Rather, a critical cultural studies framework, serving as a foundation for broader historicized articulations of mass communication and media effects, may be cumulatively constituted by various responsive considerations of the historical conditions and mechanisms of social power. Any triumph over critiques of ideological reductivism will be stronger for each complementary critical perspective.

Preserving Theoretical Critique and Political Intervention

Reflecting on the Marxist disciplining of cultural studies in the 1980s and the sustained prevalence of cultural studies in the decade's immediate wake, Agger posits these cultural studies scholars' explorations of issues of feminism, race, discourse, and postmodern textuality as decentering the project's earlier concern with Marxist class cultures. This resulted in a more complex, multifaceted perspective on contemporary culture.[65] Agger posits this period of exploration during the 1980s as following the foundational, Marxist Leftist cultural studies, as well as the subsequent period of scholars who, influenced by the Frankfurt School, afforded culture a relative autonomy largely unforeseen by Marx.

Particularly, Agger recognizes cultural studies scholarship as situated more firmly within the emancipatory tradition of the Marxist critical sociology of culture following these developments, differentiating between a conformist cultural studies which remains atheoretical and apolitical, and a critical cultural studies which recognizes that cultural reception—including cultural studies itself—must become a form of de-hierarchized cultural production in a new society. Favoring this latter, radical cultural studies, the author argues for scholarship that "decodes the hegemonizing messages of the culture industry permeating every nook and cranny of lived experience, from entertainment to education," and locates its analytical activity in "an everyday life structured by the dominant discourses of the quotidian preaching adjustment, acquiescence, and accommodation."[66]

This critical, radical cultural studies for which Agger advocates—a direct continuation of the explorations characteristic of critical cultural studies scholarship in the 1980s—would be more explicitly political, seeking to provide analyses and critiques of cultural texts and institutions. It would explicate the circuitries of cultural production, distribution, and reception in both ideological and political-economic terms in an effort to empower the culturally disenfranchised into both expressive and political action.

Continued Symbiosis

Although fissures in the disciplinary underpinnings of cultural studies were becoming more readily apparent near the end of the decade, the 1980s marked an era of productive growth that challenged core components of the project beyond its starkly Marxist and Western roots. Particularly, a "crisis in Marxism" allowed for Marxist critique to be reinterpreted not as a stable, fixed set of ideologies, but as a theoretical framework with implications for a vast array of subjectivities and discourses of power beyond class struggles. Simultaneously, the "crisis of the Left" forced critical cultural scholars to grapple with issues of social hegemony and resistance in the face of a militantly conservative Western world.[67] Consequently, the challenges and generative moments shaping the cultural studies project throughout the 1980s still mark a defining moment in the discipline's history.

This critical, radical cultural studies—informed and motivated by the scholarship of the 1980s—has remained at the forefront of cultural studies scholarship up to the present day, inspiring continued projects of symbiosis between various traditions of critical/cultural studies. Reflecting on these ongoing debates, Fuchs and Mosco sought to explicate the

ways in which a re/turn to Marxist theory and analysis would benefit the contemporary field of critical/cultural studies,[68] proposing a classification of Marxist dimensions of the critical analysis of media and communication, and—following Eagleton[69]—working to dismantle the commonly-held prejudices and critiques voiced against Marxist studies of society, media, and communication. As a neoliberal academy privileged studies of globalization and postmodernism, the debate about the place of Marxist analysis has been superseded by, essentially, an absence of Marxism in cultural studies.[70] As Fuchs & Mosco illustrated, Smythe's concerns that Western Marxism had neglected the complex role of communications in capitalism are proven fair by the clear contraction of the output of scholarly Marxist articles between the 1980s and the 2000s.[71] This period was marked by "the intensification of neoliberalism, the commodification of everything (including public service communication in many countries), and a strong turn towards postmodernism and culturalism in the social sciences."[72] As Fuchs and Mosco continuously underlined, "the work of Marx provides an essential building block" for any scholar intending to critically study communication, wishing to use that research for social change, as "to critically examine communication we need to engage with the analysis and critique of capitalism, class, exploitation and with practical struggles for emancipation."[73] A Marxist theory of communication, therefore, sees communication in relation to capitalism; "placing in the foreground the analysis of capitalism, including the development of the forces and relations of production, commodification and the production of surplus value, social class divisions and struggles, contradictions and oppositional movements."[74] Particularly, Marxist cultural studies of media and communication are not solely relevant in their contemporary moment—rather, its relevance stems from cultural studies' embeddedness into structures of inequality in class societies. Consequently, "Marx was always relevant, but being Marxist and practicing Marxism were always difficult, in part because Marxist studies lacked a solid institutional base."[75] Therefore, "the question is whether it will be possible to channel this interest into institutional transformations that challenge the predominant administrative character of media institutions and strengthen the institutionalization of critical studies of communication."[76] Cultural studies scholarship eager to engage with—and intervene in—political issues would do well to return to the project's foundational engagement with Marxism, and reconnect with the analysis of capital once central to the project's consideration of culture.

Notes

1. Mariah L. Wellman, "Years in Cultural Studies: 1983 – Stuart Hall Visits Australia and North America," *Lateral* 8.1 (2019), https://doi.org/10.25158/L8.1.13 < https://doi.org/10.25158/L8.1.13> .

2. Williams recalled, "These people were, after all, in a practical position to say 'well, if you tell me that question goes outside your discipline, then bring me someone whose discipline will cover it, or bloody well get outside of the discipline and answer it yourself.' It was from the entirely rebellious and untidy situation that the extraordinarily complicated and often muddled convergences of what became Cultural Studies occurred." It was, for Williams, a project of "{taking} the best we can in intellectual work and going with it in this very open way to confront people for whom it is not a way of life, for whom it is not in any probability a job, but for whom it is a matter of their own intellectual interest, their own understanding of the pressures on them, pressures of every kind, from the most personal to the most broadly political." Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London, UK: Verso, 1989), 157, 162.

3. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1975).

4. Williams did not advocate for an abstract critical progressivism or a principled opposition to structure per se—rather, expressing a specific, pointed concern for what disciplinary knowledge

unavoidably excludes and how it is thereby rendered incomplete in the face of actual social and cultural relationships. ↩

5. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). ↩
6. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 30. ↩
7. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 34. ↩
8. Arjun Appadurai, "Diversity and Disciplinarity as Cultural Artifacts," in *Disciplinarity and Dissent in Cultural Studies*, ed. Cary Nelson and Dilip Gaonkar (New York: Routledge, 1996), 30. ↩
9. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," *Media, Culture, and Society* 2, no. 1(1980): 57–72. ↩
10. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler, *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992). ↩
11. Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler, *Cultural Studies*, 2. ↩
12. As Murdock notes, "critical political economy is at its strongest in explaining who gets to speak to whom and what forms these symbolic encounters take in the major spaces of public culture. But cultural studies, at its best, has much of value to say about . . . how discourse and imagery are organized in complex and shifting patterns of meaning and how these meanings are reproduced, negotiated, and struggled over in the flow and flux of everyday life." Graham Murdock, "Across the Great Divide: Cultural Analysis and the Condition of Democracy." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 1 (1995): 94. ↩
13. Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms." ↩
14. As a topical enterprise, the field of cultural studies is cast as both eclectic and narrow. Characterized by a distinct set of frequently employed methodological and topical themes—whose circumstantial nature precludes accountability, reflection, and replicability—the project refuses the canonization of a coherent methodology. Such historical resistance to authoritarian policing would lead to what Morris termed the "banality" of cultural studies, through which the limited, eclectic range of theoretical coordinates allows for the re/production of a certain template of cultural studies scholarship, in which essentially the same thing can be said about any object in the cultural life. Meaghan Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies," *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 10, no. 2 (1988). ↩
15. Larry Grossberg, *Bringing It All Back Home: Essays on Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1977), 4. ↩
16. Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 5 (1986): 2–24.; Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 28–44. ↩
17. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1986). ↩
18. The major shifts and developments in the field of mass/communication studies in the United States following the adoption of various positions and aspects of the cultural studies project hinged on the ill-defined, controversial term culture. Simultaneously operating as a geographic/historical location ("a culture"), a methodological approach ("cultural studies work"), and a theoretical approach ("cultural theory"), the terms culture and cultural studies came to function as broad signifiers, warranting further specification before application. ↩
19. Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of Ideology: Return of the Repressed in Media Studies," in *Culture, Society and the Media*, eds. Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran, & Janet Woollacott (London: Methuen, 1982). ↩
20. Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1975). ↩
21. Hall, "The Rediscovery of Ideology"; Grossberg, *Bringing It All Back Home*. ↩

22. George Gerbner (ed.), "Ferment in the Field." Special Issue

23. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Martin Allor, "The Political and Epistemological Constituents of Critical Communication Research," *Journal of Communication* 33, no. 3 (1983): 208–218.

24. Dallas Walker Smythe and Tran Van Dinh, "On Critical and Administrative Research: A New Critical Analysis." *Journal of Communication* 33, no. 3 (1983): 117–127.

25. It must be noted that the form of cultural studies proposed in "Ferment" as the alternative paradigm represented a version of cultural studies tailored for the discipline of communication. This version must not be mistaken as representative of the entire intellectual project of cultural studies.

26. John Dewey, The Public and Its Problems (New York, NY: Holt Publishing, 1927); Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1945).

27. Harold D. Lasswell, "The Theory of Political Propaganda," *American Political Science Review, 21* (1927): 627–631; Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

28. Harold D. Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society," in *Mass Communications*, ed. W. Schramm (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1948; 1960), 117–129; Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz, "The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research," *Sage Annual Reviews of Communication Research* 3 (1974).

29. George Gerbner, Lany Gross, Michael Morgan and Nancy Signorielli, "The 'Mainstreaming' of America: Violence Profile no. 11," *Journal of Communication* 30, no. 3 `(1980): 1–29.

30. Hanno Hardt, *Critical Communication Studies: Communication, History, and Theory in America* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), 122.

31. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1972), 190–191.

32. Dallas Walker Smythe, *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness, and Canada* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1981).

33. Jurgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1979).

34. Richard Johnson, "What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text* 16 (1986): 38–80.

35. Similarly, Grossberg noted that a particular misreading of Hall's Encoding/decoding model—and, by extension, Marx's introduction to *Grundrisse*—equally contributed to the field's eagerness to shape cultural studies in the image of a conventional, apolitical model of communication. Grossberg, *Bringing It All Back Home*; Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Love, and Paul Willis (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 128–138; Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie* (Moscow: Marx–Engels Institute, 1939).

36. James W. Carey, "Overcoming Resistance to Cultural Studies," in *Mass Communication Review Yearbook*, vol. 5, ed. Michael Gurevitch and Mark R. Levy (London: Sage, 1985).

37. Carey, "Overcoming Resistance."

38. James Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

39. Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 5(1986): 2–24.

40. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1986).

41. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity."

42. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity."

43. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity."
44. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity."
45. Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity."
46. Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism* (London: Verso, 1977).
47. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*.
48. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology,* 88.
49. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*, 10.
50. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*, 12.
51. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*, 97.
52. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*, 136.
53. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*, 111.
54. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*, 114.
55. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*, 114
56. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*, 124.
57. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*, 141.
58. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology*, 142.
59. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.
60. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.
61. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.
62. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.
63. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.
64. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.
65. Ben Agger, *Cultural Studies as Critical Theory* (London, UK: Routledge, 1992).
66. Agger, *Cultural Studies*, 5.
67. Sebastiaan Gorissen, Elise Homan, and Ryan Kor-Sins, "Years in Cultural Studies: 1988–The Crisis in Marxist Cultural Theory," *Lateral* 8, no. 2 (2019), https://doi.org/10.25158/L8.2.12 < https://doi.org/10.25158/L8.2.12> .
68. Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco, "Marx is Back: The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today," *Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 10, no. 2 (2012): 127–132.
69. Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).
70. Gorissen, Homan, and Kor-Sins, "Years in Cultural Studies: 1988–The Crisis in Marxist Cultural Theory."
71. Fuchs and Mosco, "Marx is Back"; Dallas Walker Smythe, "Communication: Blindspot of Western Marxism," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1, no. 3 (1977).
72. Fuchs and Mosco, "Marx is Back," 128.

73. Fuchs and Mosco, "Marx is Back," 129.

74. Vincent Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009), 94.

75. Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 130.

76. Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*.

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Review of *Culture and Tactics: Gramsci, Race, and the Politics of Practice* by Robert F. Carley (State University of New York Press)

by jeffrey masko | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT In *Culture and Tactics: Gramsci, Race, and the Politics of Practice*, Robert Carley brings a wide array of theoretical and empirical study to make the claim that Antonio Gramsci was a critical race theorist, that Stuart Hall's important theoretical contributions like articulation are necessarily Marxist to bring structure and agency, long "opposite ends" of the sociological spectrum together in dialectical terms, for one to build a foundation for his original theories. He does so too when uses Gramsci's and his own work on race and ethnicity in early twentieth century Italy to bring light to the ideological aspects of today's social movements of race and class. In doing so through his various methodologies, he introduces his theory of ideological contention to explain who social movement organizations organize their tactics and how those tactics influence how groups organize, or practice ideology. His theory of aporetic governmentality, built of the foundations of Michael Foucault and Eduardo Bonilla Silva elucidate the process of institutional racism and how is manifests at the cultural and individual level, bringing a much needed Marxist lens to the issues of race, class, and social movement theory. Carley succeeds in achieving an interdisciplinary work that encompasses the areas of research needed for scholarly work that not only analyze, but create innovate theories that add to the multiple fields of research.

KEYWORDS Antonio Gramsci, critical race theory, ideology, Marxism, Stuart Hall

Culture and Tactics: Gramsci, Race, and the Politics of Practice. By Robert F. Carley. Albany, NY: SUNY University of New York Press, 2019, 240 pp. (hardback) ISBN 978–1–4384–7643–8.

In his 2019 book, *Autonomy, Refusal, and the Black Bloc: Positioning Class Analysis in Critical and Radical Theory*, Robert Carley engaged both Herbert Marcuse and Antonio Negri in his examination of the black bloc as a group of expressive tactics suggestive of class formation, not of individualism. Carley was interested in how ideology informs social practices within social movement organizations and the mutually constitutive nature of tactics and ideology as dialectical. That book's focus on tactics sets the stage for his new book, *Culture and Tactics: Gramsci, Race, and the Politics of Practice*. In it, Carley follows with another excellent analysis that seeks to position Antonio Gramsci within critical race theory and moves to develop a theory of ideology—ideological contention theory (ICT)—that springs from his work on Gramsci's organizing prior to and during the *Biennio Rosso*. Carley employs a sophisticated interdisciplinary theoretical synthesis in order to address the issues surrounding race and its connection to class in

our current political landscape.

Culture and Tactics can be read as a response to the charge that Marxist theory (and historical materialism in particular) is class reductionist. Carley accomplishes this by offering proof in the way of case studies by Gramsci to establish structural Marxism as constructivist, and necessary but not sufficient to theorizing race and racialization. It can also be seen as an intervention into cultural studies by asserting the necessity of Karl Marx and historical materialism, partly through building on Stuart Hall. One way Carley does this is to show the debt that Hall has explicitly shown to Gramsci and structural Marxism in his mid-career writing—such as in "Gramsci's Relevance" [1]—providing a theoretical bridge that allows the articulation of race and class necessary to understand what directions to take towards a more just society.

Carley succeeds on multiple levels in achieving the goals he sets out clearly and early: linking racial exclusion to economic exploitation through Gramsci's work, using a non-reductive approach to race and class, and presenting an analysis that transforms theory. He offers evidence that the conception of historical materialism that Gramsci advances can be non-deterministic and is essential as an analytical tool in Marxist theory and invaluable in social movement studies, as are ICT and aporetic governmentality. The first few chapters lay out Carley's methodologies and define terms such as tactics, practice, articulation, hegemony, and more, as well as his own notion of ICT.

His first move posits that tactics are essentially the same as practices, or at least subsumed by them categorically, allowing them to be compared to the social movement studies version of practices and protest actions and movements. Collapsing the distinction between tactics and strategy, Carley is then able to examine tactics and strategies in ideological struggles, rather than through the lens of the dialectic between military and ideological operations, supporting a much greater depth of analysis. In ICT theory, Carley "addresses the relationship between social movements' organizational composition, strategic choices, tactical actions (protest), and ideology whereby organization and ideology form a dialectical relationship" (101). ICT allows Carley to posit ideology as the "central organizing component" of the relationship within a social movement organization (112) and in doing so, opens the door for the agile materialisms of chapter five.

The next chapters look at Gramsci's work on the "Southern Question," organizing southern Sardinian workers and World War I veterans with striking workers in Turin, refusing to toe the scientific racism of the day. This is probably the best section of the book: Carley's experience researching the *Biennio Rosso* shines as he elucidates the connections between Gramsci's experiences and present day race talk in the US. He brings to light how the same mechanisms—such as regionalism and biological determinism (albeit with different characteristics)— function today, using race to exclude and the economic to exploit, all the while remaining largely unexamined by the philosophical basis of abstract liberalism that is the foundation of the institutions of this country. To excavate this further, Carley makes sure to explicitly point out that the institutions of slavery and racism must always be part of the conversation to understand past and present conjunctures that deny the Black body political subjectivity in specific historical moments.

The later chapters get more theoretical, culminating in Carley's notion of aporetic

governmentality, or how the absence of a subjectivity (in this case, the Black body in the US) links to the function of colorblindness and to modes of governmentality. From Antonio Gramsci and Stuart Hall to Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Carley expertly weaves theorists from a wide range of disciplines and fields into a coherent fabric that frames and supports his own theories of ideological contention and aporetic governmentality. By tying his explication of Hall's concept of articulation in chapters one and two to the four frames from Bonilla Silva's work and the extension of Michael Foucault's theory of governmentality in the final chapter of the book, Carley's contribution to social movement theory shines as an interdisciplinary synthesis that supports his original contentions that link race and class together.

Some questions do creep in, such as definitional slippage: are tactics and practices equivalent or does practice somehow exceed tactics? If not, what is the use of the distinction? The same can be said about the difference between strategy and tactics; if the distinction between them has indeed "collapsed," then how are they different (36)? Carley targets abstract liberalism and neoliberalism effectively as underpinning institutions that see racism and racialization as purely cultural manifestations, and yet there is some question about the relationship between the collective mass of workers in a revolutionary workers' party system and the atomization of that mass in social protest networks that social movement studies examines. For example, is the revolutionary action envisioned by Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and Gramsci the same as the protest actions proffered by social movement studies?

Nevertheless, Carley's book should go on to become a staple of research on Gramsci, social movement theory, cultural studies, communication and media studies, and more. It is truly a model of the kind interdisciplinary work needed to knit together the wide array of intellectual and political discourses for successful analysis of the present (or any) conjuncture. The book is at times quite dense with theory, and some prior knowledge of scholars like Gramsci, Hall, Bonilla-Silva, and Foucault, as well as concepts like articulation, the four frames of colorblind racism, and so on, might be necessary. However, this is unavoidable in an interdisciplinary work, and Carley handles the theoretical inclusions deftly by providing the reader the needed background in clear, accessible language. Scholars and engaged activists will find multiple insights to take with them.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, *Culture and Tactics* has an explanatory power that when applied to the current political landscape offers a way past the limitations of abstract liberalism, to find connections between structure and agency. *Culture and Tactics* allows anyone who is interested in the present conjuncture—and who has the desire to do the work—to make clear connections between race and class that can guide the trajectory of dialogue and action.

Notes

1. Hall, Stuart. "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (June 1986): 5–27. ↩

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Review of *Art as Revolt: Thinking Politics Through Immanent Aesthetics*, edited by David Fancy and Hans Skott-Myhre (McGill-Queen's University Press)

by Sean T. Leavey | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT The entanglements of "the aesthetic" and the political-economic have long been addressed in the areas of philosophy, cultural studies, and media theory. In this edited volume, David Fancy and Hans Skott-Myhre have assembled a collection of essays aimed at examining a range of aesthetic approaches to political projects untethered to "capitalist assumptions," while looking toward the possibilities of "post-capitalist futures." Through their respective contributions, the authors offer their readers ways to envision the potential for running lines of flight away from capital's apparatuses of capture by engaging in creative practice.

KEYWORDS aesthetics, art, politics, popular

Art as Revolt: Thinking Politics Through Immanent Aesthetics. Edited by David Fancy and Hans Skott-Myhre. Montreal & Kingston, CA: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019, 255 pp. (softcover) ISBN 978-0-773-55729-1. CA List: $32.95.

During the first two decades of the twenty-first century, new subjectivities and social relations have been formed through popular culture and art as micropolitical modes of desirous production, developing and circulating aesthetics, affects, and identifications. These conditions have made such concepts central to the performance of cultural-political analysis. David Fancy and Hans Skott-Myhre's *Art as Revolt: Thinking Politics Through Immanent Aesthetics*, is an edited collection of essays examining a range of aesthetic approaches to political projects that escape capitalist subsumption, while looking toward new possibilities and futures (10). To Fancy and Scott-Myhre, *Art as Revolt* is an exploration of the autopoietic productive power of art and popular culture within political contexts, in which readers are given the opportunity to "think about the force of Art writ large" (3) through philosophies of immanence (4), most notably written about by theorists Baruch Spinoza, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (7).

Focusing on a disparate range of areas such as sci-fi, punk rock, virtual reality (VR) technologies, queer aesthetics, and live role play, the works are divided into three thematic categories: "technology and futures," "aesthetics and resistance" and "autoethnographies of the post-identitarian."

Starting off the first segment of *Art as Revolt*—"Technology and Futures"—Tim Beck asserts that VR is a techno-scientific/artistic medium that produces what Deleuze and Guattari termed "nomads," (42) which are subjects able to escape "mechanic enslavement" through the indeterminate number of actualization processes possible within the context of the virtual (50). Accessing the capacities to avoid rendering by the capitalist machine allows for the explicit imagining and building of new worlds, as Malisa Kurtz's essay exemplifies in their deconstruction of colonialism in the genre of science fiction, which is enacted with the dual purpose of envisaging and constructing postcolonial futures (110). Applying the concept of "quasi-causal machines" to comprehend relationships between pasts, presents, and futures (54), Douglas Ord speculates about the metaphysical connections between seemingly distinct incidents, specifically, four different protest actions by the punk band Pussy Riot and the impact of the Chelyabinsk meteor. Bringing another analysis of digital media, Nicole Land, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, and Eric Loveland discuss how the creative play of "Minecraft" could be used to challenge the dominant logics of capitalism already embedded within the popular video game (92). Overall, this initial section supplies readers with examples of how literary genres, digital technologies, and punk-guerilla theatre are all means for the immanent formation of subjects and social relations incompatible with the capitalist system, which unfold and reverberate in ways that complicate our perceptions of linear time and "discrete" events.

"Aesthetics and Resistance," the second portion of the book, is concerned with the fine and popular arts as sites of both creativity and revolt. By bringing a schizoanlalytical lens to their examination of Paul Soldner's alchemic-artistic-scientific method for producing American raku pottery, Kathleen Skott-Myhre, Dave Collins, and Hans Skott-Myhre illustrate how creative practices intrinsically contain the immanent potential for recoding desires and eluding the molar control of form and process (154). Explaining the relationships between aesthetics, gendered performances and representations, Peter Rehberg uses the post-porn fanzine *Butt* to theorize the body as a Deleuzian desiring machine that becomes-subject under Butlerian conditions, powered by an asignifying autopoietic force while simultaneously being ideologically organized (168). To Rehberg, the queer aesthetics of *Butt* amount to significant representational and material disruptions to the market-homogenization of mainstream pornography (171). Exploring the "blues" in musical form, Mark Bishop and Hans Skott-Myhre argue that it is an assemblage constitutive of geographic areas, instrumental tones, notational structures and cultural affirmations (136). Lastly, in keeping with the theme of music, Hans Skott-Myhre, and Chris Richardson demonstrate how hip-hop figure Tupac Shakur's work was an immanent "artistic assemblage" that will forever possess the capability to compose global minoritarian geographies and subaltern revolutionary sensibilities, in spite of the consistent threat of capitalist reterritorializations of Shakur's image (191).

The final section of the book, "Autoethnographies of the Post-Identitarian," problematizes the Kantian "unified self" by looking at individuation in the social formation of political relationships beyond that of the encapsulated individual (20). Recounting an experience as a volunteer actor in a training exercise with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, David Fancy discusses how after breaking from the script of "psychopathic hostage taker" (227) and raising larger social grievances with the prison-industrial complex, policing, and capitalism, the simulation he was participating in was nudged toward simulacrum (230). Fancy's immanent approach to role playing blended the orders of reality and within that environment, led to the co-creation of new and

unpredicted narratives among all involved (229). In the only other chapter in this section, Joanna Perkins envisions the potential of mass mobilization by positioning autoethnography as a Spinozan technique for evading subsumption by the late-capitalist "zombie politics" described by Henry Giroux (202). In writing oneself, the author is enmeshed in understanding and process, which opens up possibilities for enacting our zombification beyond the narrow dead/alive hunger and desires that drive the politics of consumption (202–203). In their becoming through autoethnography, Perkins' zombie-subjects are, in authorship, intersubjectively merged within themselves and with their readers, occurring in a sense of common interest (211). Thus, as Perkins explains, this rethinking of zombification produces Spinozan agents as emergent affective embodiments of Hans Skott-Myhre and Kathleen Skott-Myhre's concept of "political love,"[1] which is the act of giving love, fully and without reservation, as an immanent creative force of and with interdependent resonances (212). Ideally, such a love would, in turn, bind the horde and direct its desire toward anti/post-capitalist political projects (213).

Spanning an array of objects of inquiry, the authors and editors of *Art as Revolt* have provided useful insights for waging aesthetic insurrections against capitalism and building better worlds through art and popular culture. Importantly, the diversity of technologies, genres, and tactical methods presented in this compilation should inspire confidence in readers that there are many lines of flight to run. As Deleuze reminds us in "Postscript on Control Societies," "it's not a matter of worrying or of hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons."[2]

Notes

1. Hans Skott-Myhre and Kathleen Skott-Myhre. "Radical Youth Work: Love and Community," *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* 20, no. 3 (2007): 48–57. ↩

2. Gilles Deleuze. "Postscript on Control Societies." In G. Deleuze, *Negotiations*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 178. ↩

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Sean T. Leavey is a Visiting Lecturer in the Media and Screen Studies Program in the Communication Studies Department at Northeastern University. His teaching and research have focused on matters related to popular culture, media governance, material culture, political economy, and social movements.

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Article details

Sean T. Leavey, "Review of *Art as Revolt: Thinking Politics Through Immanent Aesthetics* by David Fancy and Hans Skott-Myhre, Eds. (McGill-Queen's University Press)," *Lateral* 10.1 (2021).

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Journal of the Cultural Studies Association

Review of *The University and Social Justice: Struggles across the Globe* edited by Aziz Choudry and Salim Vally (Pluto Press / Between the Lines)

by Vineeta Singh | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT In this edited collection, Aziz Choudry and Salim Vally present reflections and analyses from scholar-activists in education studies, anthropology, literature, and cultural studies describing university-based and affiliated social movements. Through thirteen essays covering case studies in twelve countries, the anthology offers a broad review of student organizing against neoliberalization and more specifically, the privatization of higher education; intersectional and coalitional strategies imagined through these struggles; and alternative modes of knowledge production pre-figured in their organizing. Geographic and disciplinary breadth make the anthology a welcome addition to the growing corpus of (transnational) critical university studies.

KEYWORDS austerity, social movements, student movement, university

The University and Social Justice: Struggles across the Globe. Edited by Aziz Choudry and Salim Vally. London: Pluto Press, Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2020 pp. 260 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-77113-504-7. US List: $26.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought a new wave of attention to troubling trends in higher education across the globe. In many states and regions, creeping privatization and authoritarianism, combined with the anticipated economic fallout from the global health pandemic, have made already tenuous institutions even more precarious. Choudry and Vally's anthology shines a light on genealogies of struggle that many of us could use right now. The scholar-activists who have contributed to the collection trace the deep historical roots of current crises in higher education; offer examples of campaigns against austerity and state repression led by students and academics; and theorize organizing as a site and mode of knowledge production. In addition to discussing past and present struggles the authors—many of whom are veterans of student and other social justice organizing—frequently make recommendations for how to de-fetishize the labels of "student" and "education" in order to promote broad-based coalitional organizing that can address the systemic causes of intensifying privatization and censorship on university campuses. All royalties from the book are being donated to the Centre for Education Rights and Transformation at the University of Johannesburg.

Choudry and Vally open the anthology with an introduction that shares the core questions animating the texts in the collection: "What can be learned from the strategies, tactics, demands, and visions generated by student movements? What are their possibilities and

limitations? How have these struggles resonated (or not) with other parts of society? How do current/recent movements/forms of activism relate to earlier moments in history/periods of struggle over education and society?" (6). The wide-ranging nature of these questions hints at the sweeping purview of the anthology. The geographic scope of the anthology is as broad as its intellectual sweep, addressing student movements against corporatization and privatization in the United Kingdom, Québec, Chile, Palestine, France, and South Africa; against the repression of anti-neoliberal dissent in Turkey, Chile, the United States, Mexico, and Nigeria; and, in one case in India, against the democratization of higher education. While the authors examine seemingly disparate examples across time and space, clear thematics organize these chapters: how student struggles "can catalyse or incubate wider struggles" (32); how these struggles ignore intersectional analyses at their own peril; the susceptibility of student struggles to cooptation by the agility of neoliberal governance; and the undercommoning practices that create new modes of world- and knowledge-making in struggle. As a whole, the anthology is a valuable survey of global student organizing and as a potential starting point for a relational, transnational study of the same.

Several essays focus their study on the demands and tactics of student organizing, including Lena Meari and Rula Abu Duhou's analysis of the September 2016 strike at Birzeit University in the West Bank and Julie Le Mazier's study of four national-level student mobilizations in France. Others, including Gükden Özcan's overview of two moments of post-coup organizing among Turkish academics and Rhoda Nanre Nafziger and Krystal Strong's analysis of student organizing in Nigeria, are driven more by an analysis of student movements within larger contexts of social justice organizing and broad-based state repression. But nearly all speak to the value of building what Cathy Cohen has elsewhere termed a "systems-based left analysis."[1] And all are useful in their introduction to comparative movement building.

Scholars working on or in student movements will find particularly useful Prem Kumar Vijayan's theorization of the "unruly student" (41–59)—an institutionally produced figure first incited to perform insurgency and then recruited into repressing similar expressions of discontent—as well as Asher Gamedz and Leigh-Ann Naidoo's reflections on knowledge production about, in, and *through* movement organizing, particularly in their meditations on reading as "a practice of dialogue and generous listening" (202) and "the editor-in-struggle's role as that of an organizer" (203).

Scholar-activists in the US will also benefit from Rabab Ibrahim Abdulhadi and Saliem Shehadeh's frank account of the how the Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diaspora program at San Francisco State University has had to confront the deliberate entanglements of Zionism and corporatization. Abdulhadi and Shehadeh describe how populating boards of trustees with "corporate leaders, including CEOs, partners at mega law firms, foundation directors and policy analysts in non-adjacent fields" reflects and intensifies the influence of private interests in higher education (124).

The emergence of critical university studies, a field that began to coalesce in response to the anti-austerity organizing of students and academics in 2009 and 2010, has been marked by periodic calls for more transnational analyses, for deeper historical engagement with neoliberalization, and for the de-fetishization of the university as irreconcilably different from any other institution of civil society. The essays in this collection are poised to fill precisely these gaps. It's certainly possible that critical university studies scholars in the US are not the interlocutors most authors had in mind as they wrote their essays; many

of the contributors are social scientists and work outside the literary and cultural studies fields of critical university studies specialists. Even so, this anthology as a lot to offer scholars working in critical university studies, cultural studies, and any field that values a praxis of institutional critique and modes of knowledge production that are "in but not of" the university.

Notes

1. Cathy J Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, no. 4 (1997): 437–65.

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Vineeta Singh, "Review of *The University and Social Justice: Struggles across the Globe* by edited by Aziz Choudry and Salim Vally (Pluto Press / Between the Lines)," *Lateral* 10.1 (2021).

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Journal of the Cultural Studies Association

Review of *Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary: Understanding U.S. Immigration for the Twenty-First Century* by A. Naomi Paik (University of California Press)

by Travis Franks | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT A. Naomi Paik's *Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary* responds to a trio of executive orders on immigration policy issued in the early days of Donald Trump's presidency. Those orders sought to make good on campaign promises to further restrict immigration by banning citizens from Muslim-majority countries, allocating funds to expand a border wall between the US and Mexico, and ramping up home and workplace deportation raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Paik delineates how these legal barriers came to be by locating them in relation to the nation's formative immigration policies, backlash to the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the global repercussions of neoliberalism. Highlighting the work of Indigenous activists, Paik eventually calls not only for the dramatic restructuring of the nation's immigration system but also for the creation of a more just society based on relationships that reject the politics of inclusion and exclusion.

KEYWORDS border, Donald Trump, immigration, Muslims, wall, xenophobia

Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary: Understanding U.S. Immigration for the Twenty-First Century. By A. Naomi Paik. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020, 173 pp. (paperback). ISBN 978-0-520-30512-0. US List: $18.95.

A. Naomi Paik's *Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary* responds to a trio of executive orders on immigration policy issued in the early days of Donald Trump's presidency. Those orders sought to make good on campaign promises to further restrict immigration by banning citizens from Muslim-majority countries, allocating funds to expand a border wall between the United States and Mexico, and ramping up home and workplace deportation raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Paik delineates how these legal barriers came to be by locating them in relation to the nation's formative immigration policies, backlash to the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the global repercussions of neoliberalism. Highlighting the work of Indigenous activists like Nick Estes and Melanie Yazzie, Paik eventually calls not only for the dramatic restructuring of the nation's immigration system but also for the creation of a more just society based on relationships that reject the us-versus-them politics of inclusion and exclusion.

Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary is Paik's second book and the twelfth installment in University of California Press's American Studies Now series, edited by Lisa Duggan and

Curtis Marez. The series consists of concise works meant to address urgent current events and foster discussions amongst students and activists alike. In addition to the standard table of contents, the front matter includes chapter overviews with pithy summaries and pertinent keywords, as well as a prefatory note titled "How to Use This Book." There, Paik suggests that the text functions as a form of resistance to the Trump administration and as a broader critique of the current so-called immigration crisis in the US. She frames her critique as a history of the present, placing Trump's recent nativist policies within the *longue durée* of exclusionary practices in the US and forecasting ways in which other seemingly less vulnerable groups may soon be targeted.

Of significant note, Paik frames her critique of exclusionary immigration laws in the US in relation to the nation's settler colonial origins. Paik's previous work on citizenship and the carceral state shows here, as she routinely refers to Kelly Lytle Hernández's *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* (2017) when discussing settler colonialism rather than turning to the ubiquitous works of Patrick Wolfe or Lorenzo Veracini. As such, Paik avoids a too-broad settler–Indigenous binary and theoretical generalizing about settler colonialism in toto. Indeed, she deftly weaves an examination of specific legal histories of Indigenous and Black peoples into her analysis of the various "others" upon whom US settler society has relied, particularly Chinese, Arab, Muslim, and Latinx populations, arguing that the legal understanding of immigration as a matter of national sovereignty "reveals the centrality of settler colonialism and slavery—and in turn Native elimination and anti-Black racism—to our deportation obsession today" (79). In this way, *Bans, Walls, Raids, and Sanctuary* aligns with other recent works emphasizing relational analysis, such as Lisa Lowe's *The Intimacy of Four Continents* and the anthology *Relational Formations of Race*, edited by Natalia Molina, Daniel Martinez HoSang, and Ramón A. Gutiérrez.

The book consists of an introduction, four body chapters, and an epilogue. Those body chapters individually address the four concepts of the book's title: bans, walls, raids, and sanctuary. In each of these, Paik unpacks the legal histories leading to Trump's 2017 executive orders concerning immigration.

In Chapter 2, Paik focuses her analysis on bans by placing Trump's Muslim-majority travel restrictions in conversation with the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, racially-coded naturalization laws, nineteenth-century Chinese exclusion acts, and post-war immigration quotas, arguing that the colonial origins of the US are made possible by white nationalist ideals and form the concept of a white nation that persist today. She also demonstrates the capricious nature of contemporary anti-Muslim racism, which amalgamates "those who appear Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim" into an emerging racial category marked as always already potential terrorists (31).

In Chapter 3, "Walls," Paik links Trump's executive order to build a wall along the US southern border to legislative acts such as the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act and the 1929 Undesirable Aliens Act, which transformed border crossing into an issue of national security and policing rather than one of labor rights. Paik also clearly demonstrates how the rise of neoliberal policies such as NAFTA coincided with the increased criminalization of migrants from Mexico and Central and South America and the booming prison industry.

In Chapter 4, "Raids," Paik parallels current deportation practices with previous removal

legislation, namely the 1830 Indian Removal Act and the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. That is, these historical legislative acts represent a precedent for the forced removal of non-citizens by the state, and just as the originary acts are based on anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism, so too is Trump's executive order based on nativist fears of foreigners. Further, Paik insists that deportation has come to be seen as a "common sense" form of enforcing the boundaries between those who are included or excluded, paying particular attention to the role that Democrat administrations under former presidents Clinton and Obama played in the criminalization of noncitizens (95–96).

The final body chapter, "Sanctuary," charts a history of the extralegal concept of sanctuary in relation to state sovereignty. Paik also develops here her concept of *abolitionist sanctuary*, a holistic approach to reform that extends beyond "single issues—like creating a path to citizenship for some at the cost of criminalizing everyone else," and seeks to eradicate "root causes that have led to the predicaments of bans, walls, and raids" (113). In the epilogue, Paik gestures toward articulations of Indigenous sovereignty that predate the US as a way of imagining alternative forms of belonging that can shape the future.

Given the text's brevity and Paik's clear, engaging prose, *Bans, Walls, Raids, and Sanctuary* will make an excellent addition to introductory courses focusing on migration, legal history, critical race, or US empire. Because it is also so timely, the book has the potential to find a wider readership beyond university classrooms and will likely appeal to anyone interested in challenging attacks on minoritized groups. Indeed, *Bans, Walls, Raids, and Sanctuary* could easily share shelf space with the works of Rebecca Solnit and Naomi Klein because of Paik's ability to combine academic rigor and a convincing sense of urgency into a story that we need to hear and act on here and now.

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Article details

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Review of *Digitize and Punish: Racial Criminalization in the Digital Age* by Brian Jefferson (University of Minnesota Press)

by Anastasia Kārkliņa | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT In *Digitize and Punish*, Brian Jefferson argues that the US policing and incarceration infrastructure is increasingly marked by new forms of racialized digital criminalization. Examining the incorporation of digital technologies into the criminal justice apparatus, Jefferson shows the central role that digital technology and data science has had in reinforcing racial surveillance practices since the War on Drugs and Crime began more than four decades ago. Jefferson's timely new book traces the merging of carcerality and technology in Chicago and New York City, unveiling forms of digital racial management that have remained largely obscured from the public.

KEYWORDS abolitionism, carcerality, criminalization, police, surveillance, technology

Digitize and Punish: Racial Criminalization in the Digital Age. By Brian Jefferson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020. 232 pp. (paperback) ISBN: 9781517909239. US List: $24.95.

Mass protests against police violence this summer have prominently placed the issue of policing at the forefront of the national discourse, reinvigorating abolitionists' decades-long demands to end carceral logics that organize social life in the United States. In *Digitize and Punish*, Brian Jefferson reveals an alarming side of policing and state surveillance that remains largely obscured from the public. While public outrage has been evoked by highly visible instance of police violence, Jefferson wants to consider more insidious forms of racial governance. The tech industry is responsible for new forms of social control that have been made possible by the consolidation of carceral logics and technology. Digital computing has been silently incorporated into the policing apparatus, pushed by leaders in the IT industry, tech research, and government. In a digital carceral state, Jefferson argues, the database—and not the prison cell—is the new frontier of the criminal justice apparatus.

Brian Jefferson's *Digitize and Punish* lays out its argument with clarity and purposeful precision, and is remarkably timely in light of national conversations about policing. Jefferson situates his research within the abolitionist struggle against police and prisons, and activists' efforts to confront and resist the carceral state. The proliferation of prisons, jails, and detention centers, argues Jefferson, is not the only impetus for the crisis of mass incarceration in the United States. New criminal justice technologies that were marketed to the criminal justice system by private tech firms and corporations have extended and formalized carceral surveillance of populations that are deemed expendable beyond the

walls of these facilities. At the heart of the book lies an urgent concern with the way in which new computational technologies have been integrated into the criminal justice apparatus to surveil, manage, and police criminalized communities.

But Jefferson is not simply advocating for eliminating digitized forms of policing and criminalization. His expository analysis of how urban criminality was understood and conceptualized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demonstrates how biometric data and digital technologies became "commonsense solutions to social problems" (184). In this sense, it is the cultural ideology of policing, Jefferson shows, that makes the practices of digitized surveillance possible in the first place. In short, a crucial part of Jefferson's critique here is aimed not only at the use of technology in the criminal justice system as such but at the socio-political conditions that made digitized surveillance not only possible but desirable.

In the first chapter, Jefferson clearly articulates how, with the invention of the electromechanical tabulator, early data on prisoner offenses established a direct link between racial identifiers and different types of criminal offenses. At the turn of the twentieth century, the production of "criminological knowledge" (24) was tainted by "biological and cultural explanations" (27) of criminality that understood deviancy to be the result of racial difference. But even as criminologists moved away from biological racism and its pseudoscientific belief in racial inferiority and instead focused on the role of physical environments, this new attention to what Jefferson calls "social ecology," nevertheless, produced criminal data that perpetuated the assumption that criminality was inherent to "negatively racialized, criminalized urban areas" (31). This patently solidified associations between blackness and criminality, framed crime as innate to communities that were economically deprived and historically disadvantaged, and eventually laid the necessary ideological groundwork for the merging of policing and digital computing in the 1960s (27, 24). Digitized criminalization, however, did not occur in isolation. It was made possible precisely because production of new digital technologies and their integration into the policing apparatus was a lucrative venture for IT companies that sprung out of emerging tech hubs across the country. Jefferson introduces readers to the nuances of how private technology firms, such as Lockheed Martin and IBM, intentionally marketed new computing technologies to investigative units and police departments, their efforts aided by computer scientists, criminologists, and state officials.

To this end, one of Jefferson's main arguments in *Digitize and Punish* is that data science is not neutral. It is inherently political; it is production of knowledge as well as technology. Throughout the book, Jefferson pays particularly attention to how developers of new carceral technologies approach the policing apparatus as, first and foremost, a profitable window of opportunity to "digitally carceralize" historically oppressed communities (61). While "southern segregationists normalized racialized policing through biological racism, explicit laws, and overt racial demagoguery," Jefferson argues that "northern powers normalized it through mathematical formulas" (63).

In the second chapter, Jefferson shows how the adaptation of digital technology coincides with mass incarceration: automation became a more efficient way to process rising numbers of inmates, while new video technologies, tracking devices, and "risk-assessment algorithms" enhanced carceral surveillance of prison populations (75). What readers will appreciate about the third and the fourth chapters of *Digitize and Punish* is the focus provided by Jefferson's in-depth interrogation of the use of computer technology in police departments in Chicago and New York City, such as computer-aided sweeps, spatial

analysis software, and the role of wireless networks. These chapters both reveal strategies of policing that are obscured from the public eye and contextualize practices that we take for granted: for example, the emergence of wireless network technology made criminal databases widely available to the public over the Internet. Anyone with access to the web —including non-profits, banks, state agencies, and private companies—could now freely access criminal data for any reason, including reviewing or even selling background checks on select individuals. In the fifth and last chapter, Jefferson demonstrates how the steady digitalization of policing mechanisms profoundly alters urban geography, such that new technologies, including smart cameras, environmental sensors, and GPS monitors, form a new kind of hyper-carceral ecosystem that will likely result in emergent forms of racial management that have not been seen before.

Jefferson's compelling and visionary book pays close attention both to contextual breadth and qualitative depth. *Digitize and Punish* attends to the larger socio-historic context and is, at the same time, laser-focused in its evaluation of specific technologies. Over the course of the book, the author supplements case studies with narratives of historical conditions that provide superb analytical value and points of connection for readers in adjacent disciplines.

Digitize and Punish will be of great interest to scholars not only in the fields of geography, information science, and technology studies, but also those interested in the history of policing in the United States, urban sociology, and race and ethnicity studies more broadly. Finally, this book would undoubtedly be a valuable resource not only for academic audiences but also for technology and policy professionals who are are invested in understanding technological innovation and its social implications through the lens of racial justice.

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Journal of the Cultural Studies Association

Review of *The Anti-Capitalist Chronicles* by David Harvey (Pluto Press)

by Austin Gallas | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT *The Anti-Capitalist Chronicles* is a collection of accessible, loosely connected essays by influential Marxist geographer David Harvey. Based on episodes of Harvey's podcast of the same name, the book tackles topics related to the contemporary and historical crises of global capitalism. In nineteen brief, topical chapters, Harvey appropriates and reimagines Marxian categories and anti-capitalist frameworks of various kinds in order to report on the changing shape of global capitalism considered as a historically distinct social formation, the internal logics and contradictions which govern capital's movements in the world, and the obstacles to be overcome by socialist politics.

KEYWORDS capital, geography, global capitalism, political economy, socialism

The Anti-Capitalist Chronicles. By David Harvey. London: Pluto Press, 2020, 240 pp. (paperback) IBSN 9780745342092. US List: $19.95.

David Harvey is perhaps the world's best-known living Marxist intellectual. Harvey has for decades introduced audiences around the globe to accessible analyses of global capitalism. A senior scholar in his field of geography and author of more than two dozen books, including *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (2014) and *Marx, Capital, and the Madness of Economic Reason* (2017), Harvey's articulation of neoliberalism as a class project is well known by scholars across the humanities and social sciences. His open-access lecture series on volumes 1 and 2 of Marx's *Capital* (and, more recently, the *Grundrisse*) have contributed to the wave of popular and scholarly interest in Marx's critique of political economy which has followed in the wake of the Great Recession.

Harvey's latest public-facing effort, *The Anti-Capitalist Chronicles* (2020), offers readers two things. It contains useful commentaries on the crises of global capitalism and the socialist possibilities opened up in the contemporary conjuncture. But it is also a handy portal into some of the most exciting realms of Harvey's intellectual output. Readers already familiar with Harvey's work will appreciate how he revivifies concepts and interventions from various periods in his career, using them to weave together insightful, unfamiliar commentaries on important matters, from financialization to urban development to geopolitical and military contests. Newcomers to Harvey's work are sure to find in the *Chronicles* ample incentive to begin the long and fruitful journey through his prodigious oeuvre. Educators will be pleased to encounter a book constructed with them in mind.

The basic premise of the book—that global capitalism is facing a number of existential crises, many of which are products of capital's own internal contradictions—will surely resonate with many readers who have lived through the rolling disasters of 2020. But there is a secondary thesis running through the book which is equally important: that socialists

need to arrive at a more holistic appreciation of the obstacles in the path of anti-capitalist programs. To be successful, says Harvey, socialism will have to "negotiate a knife-edge path," for, on the one hand, the existing systems for distribution and provision seem "too big to fail," while, on the other hand, these same systems are breaking down under the weight of their own contradictions, and are foreclosing on the future by compromising the possibility of harmonic relations between humanity and the natural world (11).

The book is composed of a series of thematic essays on various urgent theoretical, historical, and contemporary concerns. Some chapters, like those on the resurgence of anti-austerity politics in Chile and China's rising significance within the global economic order, distill and reinforce insights Harvey has been writing about for decades. Other chapters, such as the one on anti-capitalism in the time of COVID-19, engage in speculative commentaries on geopolitical, environmental, and technological tensions that are fluid and still unfolding.

Chapters can be broadly categorized into three areas: how global capitalism works and how it fails, the internal logics and contradictions of a capitalist economy, and the challenges and radical potentialities involved in the creation of socialist alternatives. Each chapter tends to emphasize one theme over the rest, even as these three themes often blur together in significant ways.

Chapters 1, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 14 focus on various crises within the actually existing global capitalist system. In Chapter 8, a sprawling narrative takes us from the opium wars in China to the post-crisis austerity politics in today's Greece. Harvey retools some of his best-known categories like the "spatial fix" to analyze the shape of the modern global capitalist system and the historical processes which played parts in its construction. In Chapter 14, he appropriates Marxian critiques of the endless growth syndrome inherent to industrial capitalism to offer a nuanced analysis of the political–economic origins of the carbon dioxide buildup driving catastrophic climate change.

In chapters 2, 3, 4, 10, 13, and 15, the emphasis is on the internal logics and contradictions of capital itself, as well as on the mainstream economic theories that obscure these logics and contradictions. While the level of analysis in these chapters tends towards the theoretical, these chapters offer more than abstract ideas. They underline the real-world implications of the internal laws of motion natural to industrial capital. In chapter 13, for instance, Harvey deploys value theory to elaborate the implications of the growth of the service economy and new forms of consumerism to the composition of the working classes in de-industrialized nations like the United Kingdom and the United States.

The third group of essays, consisting of chapters 5, 6, 16, 17, 18, and 19, concerns the challenges facing anti-capitalist projects. Harvey considers possible routes along which anti-capitalist transformation might proceed, including opportunities which might be seized by workers situated across various geographic and national contexts. In chapter 6, Harvey argues that socialist politics must be concerned with the protection and development of individual, as well as collective, freedoms.

In the hopes that it will be taken up by reading groups around the world, the book's editors, Jordan T. Camp and Chris Caruso, have worked to make it as friendly as possible to divergent learning environments. For example, discussion questions and additional reading suggestions are provided for each of its nineteen chapters.

Though less elaborate than some of Harvey's other scholarly productions, *Chronicles* is nonetheless a welcome addition to the library of anyone working to understand the possibilities and theoretical nuances of contemporary anti-capitalist politics. It offers essential, timely commentaries on subjects of the highest significance to the present and future shape of global capitalism. Best of all, it does so in a charming, approachable way—a rare and commendable feat.

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Austin Gallas is a doctoral candidate in Cultural Studies at George Mason University. His research explores bourgeois police reform, undercover surveillance, and the political economy of prostitution in Progressive-era New York City through a Marxist lens. He is a member of the Cultural Studies Association.

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Journal of the Cultural Studies Association

Review of *Tehrangeles Dreaming: Intimacy and Imagination in Southern California Iranian Pop Music* by Farzaneh Hemmasi (Duke Press)

by Siavash Rokni | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT *Tehrangeles Dreaming* is the first book about the Tehrangeles music industry, that is, the Iranian diaspora music industry brought to life by the expatriate Iranian artists and music producers who settled in Los Angeles and Southern California after the 1979 Iranian revolution. Farzaneh Hemmasi uses an ethnographic approach in combination with an analysis of diaspora media discourse in order to "examine expatriate imaginations of influence on, and intimacy with, their global Iranian audiences" (26). At its core, the book deals with the imagining and reimagining of Iranian identity by the artistic community that creates music and media content for Iranians in Iran and across the world.

KEYWORDS diaspora, ethnomusicology, Iran, Iranian Americans, Los Angeles, music

Tehrangeles Dreaming: Intimacy and Imagination in Southern California Iranian Pop Music Studies. By Farzaneh Hemmasi. Duke University Press 2020, 246 pp. (paperback) IBSN 978-1-4780-0836-1. US List: $26.95.

In one of his first speeches to Iranian radio employees after the 1979 revolution, Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini linked music to the consumption of opium and banned the public playing, selling, and distribution of music in the country.[1] Through the 1980s, most music genres were interpreted as sinful and not in alignment with the values of the new system of governance based on Shari'a law. This left many Iranian musicians and producers with little choice but to leave their profession or the country. Many chose the latter and joined forces in Southern California to start a new music industry known as Tehrangeles, a portmanteau that connects the cities of Tehran and Los Angeles.

Tehrangeles Dreaming is the first book dedicated to understanding this music industry as a cultural phenomenon. The book uses extensive ethnographic field studies alongside diaspora media analysis to paint a picture of the way Iranian identity is imagined and communicated by different actors in this music scene. I see this book as a continued lineage of many scholars, mostly women, who have shown us the importance of studying Iranian popular music in understanding Iranian contemporary culture and its politics. Thus, Hemmasi's book is as much a contribution in the field of Iranian diaspora studies[2] as it is in the field of Iranian popular music studies.

The book begins with an introductory chapter that historicizes and contextualizes the rise of the popular music industry in Iran before the revolution. In it, we learn about the "golden age" of Iranian popular music (between the 1950s and 1970s), the changes that followed the Iranian revolution in 1979, and the rise of Tehrangeles music industry in Southern California. The chapter then looks at Tehrangeles and the negative discourse and stereotypes associated with the place, the people who live there, and the artists who work in its music industry. In doing so, it looks past the stereotypes, clarifies terminologies that are used in the book, and emphasizes the significance of research on this industry.

The first and second chapters contextualize the study by looking at the music and the main actors who helped shape it. In the first chapter, the dance rhythm largely associated with Persian pop music, the *shesh o hasht* (6/8) or *Dambuli*, is first studied from a technical standpoint.[3] Hemmasi then explores the discourses and politics surrounding this popular rhythm, which was banned in domestic music production in Iran for over twenty years as it was incorporated into Tehrangeles music and "became associated with Tehrangeles itself" (30). The second chapter explores the lives and works of four figures who kick-started the Tehrangeles music industry and offers a "layered, ambivalent relationship to legacy, history, and heritage" (96). It details Hemmasi's encounters with music producer Manouchehr Bibiyan and reviews his contributions to Iranian pop music before and after the revolution. It continues with an analysis of the artist Shahram Shabpareh and his career as the "icon of happiness" (84). It concludes by examining the rise and fall of Vartan Avenssian and Jahangir Tabrei's Taraneh label, as their main source of income, selling cassettes and CDs, slowly became obsolete with the advent of music digitization. The chapter provides significant insight into the roots of the Tehrangeles music scene and provides an invaluable analysis about the motivation, aspirations, and dreams of those who founded it.

The third chapter examines three performers who deal with the "unintended consequences of their Tehrangeles careers" (100). This includes dancer turned fitness instructor, Mohammad Khordadian, the titular fictional Los Angeles cabaret singer in the film *Maxx*, and the female vocalist Shahrzad Sepanlou. Hemmasi's choice of cases, particularly the inclusion of a fictional character alongside real artists, risks the coherence of this chapter. The chapter looks at *Maxx* and Khordadian together as they both treat the subject of return to Iran. While *Maxx* portrays an imaginary case of what would happen if a sexually ambiguous male *los anjelesi* performer returns to the country, Khordadian's story is a real case of an openly gay Iranian man who returned to Iran, was arrested, and was tried for his cultural activities abroad. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the Iranian singer Sepanlou and shows how she deals with the "challenges of navigating her emplacement in layered American, Iranian and diasporic cultural fields" (120).

The last two chapters of the book examine the lives and legacies of two of the biggest stars of Iranian pop music, Faegheh Atashin (whose stage name is Googoosh) and Dariush Eghbali. It attends to their career histories, music, politics, and current activities in the diaspora media. By law, solo female singers are not allowed to sing publicly in Iran. As an Iranian female singer who stayed in the country after the revolution for twenty years, Googoosh's silence became the metaphor of the silencing of female voices in the country. Hemmasi tends to this idea by investigating how Googoosh recreated herself as an expatriate singer when she left Iran and restarted her career abroad. Through the exploration of her music videos, lyrics, and media activities, Hemmasi shows how Googoosh's "metaphorical language of voice" (151) becomes an important part of her

image as a person who gives voice to history, performs silence, and becomes "Mother Iran" (144). The fourth chapter also examines the life and works of singer Dariush Eghbali. Known as the Sultan of Sadness for his melancholic music, Dariush is respected by many for not only his music but also his political stance against both the Pahlavi government as well as the Islamic Republic. The chapter examines this past and shows how Dariush reinvented himself as an activist and a humanitarian celebrity following his battles with opium and heroin use for decades. Having made his struggle with addiction and recovery part of his public persona, he openly discusses his challenges with addiction on satellite television and has developed the Ayeneh (Mirror) Foundation as a way to "address Iranians' 'social maladies'—especially addiction" (155). By reiterating how Dariush brought "the tenets of NA—the Twelve Steps, the slogans, and the practice of witnessing recovery—into the Persian language and broadcast them on satellite television," (182) the chapter shows how Dariush used his previous experiences to advocate for others going through recovery.

Hemmasi's book is an invaluable contribution to the study of Iranian popular culture. As Hemmasi has mentioned in a recent podcast interview, popular music analysis has mostly been ignored by Iranian scholars due to the concentration of literature on Persian art music.[4] Thus, this book is a breath of fresh air and it is very insightful for those who are interested in understanding Iranian popular culture as well as Iranian diaspora media practices. Hemmasi is a truly powerful narrator in her ethnographic work and she provides a profoundly deep and pointed analysis of the history, activities, and imaginations of the Tehrangeles music industry and its scene. This book is a welcomed addition to the study of the Iranian popular music and to the development of the Iranian popular music studies.

Notes

1. Nahid Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).
2. Ida Yalzadeh, "Review of Tehrangeles Dreaming: Intimacy and Imagination in Southern California's Iranian Pop Music," *Jadaliyya*, June 23, 2020, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41329 < https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41329> .
3. This rhythm is different from the Western 6/8 as the first beat grouping is formulated as an eighth note followed by two sixteenth notes and another eighth note while the second grouping consists of an eighth note followed by a quarter note. The best representation of this rhythm in classical music can be found in the rhythmic pattern of the first measure of the third movement of Otar Taktakishvili's *Sonata for Flute and Piano in C Major*.
4. Farzaneh Hemmasi, "Tehrangeles Dreaming Intimacy and Imagination in Southern California's Iranian Pop Music," Oct 12, 2020, podcast hosted by Aaron M. Hagler, New Books Network, https://newbooksnetwork.com/farzaneh-hemmasi-tehrangeles-dreaming-intimacy-and-imagination-in-southern-californias-iranian-pop-music-duke-up-2020 < https://newbooksnetwork.com/farzaneh-hemmasi-tehrangeles-dreaming-intimacy-and-imagination-in-southern-californias-iranian-pop-music-duke-up-2020> .

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Review of *Disruptive Situations: Fractal Orientalism and Queer Strategies in Beirut* by Ghassan Moussawi (Temple University Press)

by Robert Flahive | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT Ghassan Moussawi's *Disruptive Situations* challenges the exceptionalist representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) experiences in Beirut through a focus on the everyday queer strategies and tactics. Moussawi analyzes the everyday practices of LGBT interlocutors navigating al-wad' (the situation), a term that refers to the normative order of disruptions, precarity, and instability that permeate daily life across contemporary Beirut. Al-wad' simultaneously features as a historical condition of perpetual instability bearing on daily life in Beirut, as well as a lens to analyze the practices of everyday life for Moussawi's LGBT interlocutors. Moussawi's inductive ethnographic approach charts the strategic use of identities, visibility, and "bubbles" or sources of solace in order to challenge exceptionalist representations of Beirut and LGBT experiences in the city. Moussawi critiques these reductive representations as "fractal orientalism", a reductive representation that embeds hierarchies and exclusion through geographic associations, such as in fashioning Beirut as the "Paris of the Middle East". Beirut becomes charming and "cosmopolitan" in a way that is similar to, but not quite, the same as Paris. Moussawi's focus on queer daily practices against the backdrop of al-wad' shows the limitations of these reductive representations in an effort to reimagine queerness, subjectivity, and politics.

KEYWORDS Beirut, gender, queer, sexuality

Disruptive Situations: Fractal Orientalism and Queer Strategies in Beirut. By Ghassan Moussawi. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2020, 210 pp. (ebook) ISBN 978-1-4399-18517. US List: $29.95.

In *Disruptive Situations: Fractal Orientalism and Queer Strategies in Beirut*, Ghassan Moussawi inverts the premise at the core of queer theory of disrupting a normative position by inquiring into the normative social condition of perpetual disruption that marks daily life in Beirut. In other words, "living amid an already *queer situation* means that everyday-life strategies of survival in Beirut are *queer*" (79, italics in original). Moussawi's inversion centers the everyday queer strategies and tactics of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) interlocutors navigating *al-wad'* (the situation), a nebulous term that refers to the normative order of disruptions, precarity, and instability that permeate daily life across contemporary Beirut. For Moussawi, al-wad' simultaneously features as a historical condition of "imminent disruption" bearing on daily life in Beirut, as well as an analytical lens to unpack the everyday strategies used to navigate these

disruptions (3). Through a grounded, inductive approach to these daily practices, Moussawi shows how LGBT interlocutors inhabit multiple, fluid positionalities that are always changing relative to al-wad'. Moussawi lingers on these ambiguities as part of the effort to reimagine notions of queerness, subjectivity, and politics.

Moussawi's focus on daily practices is motivated by a critique of exceptionalist representations of Beirut and LGBT experiences there through the conceptual tool of "fractal orientalism." In contrast to the monolithic categories rendered through Edward Said's notion of the orient and occident,[1] fractal orientalism is a relational construct of "nested binaries" that produces hierarchies and exclusions based on geographic associations that operate transnationally, regionally, nationally, and locally among the neighborhoods of Beirut (37). A well-trodden transnational example fashions Beirut as the "Paris of the Middle East," which appends exceptional qualities to Beirut by excising the city from its regional surroundings. The associations of Beirut with Paris assert notions of a "modern," "cosmopolitan" European-like city that is not quite European, but also unlike cities across the Middle East (11). Moussawi's intervention departs from fixed and reductive binary representations of East-West that defined classic orientalism by accounting for how the relational narratives of fractal orientalism obfuscate local political economies of gender and sexuality within Beirut. For Moussawi, fractal orientalist representations of the "openness" of Beirut elide local struggles faced by the most vulnerable populations based on race, class, gender, sexuality, or citizenship status (examples of the latter include Syrians, migrant workers, or Palestinian refugees).

Disruptive Situations is organized according to the intertwined aims of critiquing exclusionary representations, and analyzing queer tactics and strategies of daily life in Beirut. The text includes five chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce and show the pervasiveness of fractal orientalism, whereas chapters 3–5 map the different queer strategies and tactics of Moussawi's LGBT interlocutors.

Chapters 1 and 2 critique the proliferation of fractal orientalism in transnational and local representations of and within Beirut. Whereas the racialized, sexualized, and gendered logics of transnational fractal orientalist representations of Beirut gloss over the effects of racism, sexism, and sectarian divisions, Moussawi details how LGBT interlocutors respond by variously contesting and reproducing fractal orientalism. For example, interlocutors describe being shamed based on markers of class status such as insufficient English or French proficiency that uphold the "global imaginings of what constitutes gay-friendly spaces and people" (33). Alternatively, one of Moussawi's interlocutors strategically gender identified as a female at military checkpoints so as to avoid inappropriate touching by soldiers. By highlighting the limitations within fractal orientalist representations of Beirut, Moussawi advances the need for a grounded approach that details how LGBT interlocutors contest and rework fractal orientalism.

Moussawi emphasizes relationality in his inductive analysis of the everyday strategic use of identities, visibility, and sources of solace from al-wad' in chapters 3–5. Rather than "reconcile" what are assumed to be coherent, mutually-exclusive identities (e.g., Muslim or Christian and gay), Moussawi's LGBT interlocutors decenter static universalized European-American LGBT subjectivities of "closeted" or "out" through the adaptations of identities to the fluid conditions of al-wad'. Here, the interlocutors "embrace and make use of seeming contradictions in their lives" by continually negotiating what to make visible, to whom, and under what circumstances (102). These relational practices

challenge the notion of fixed identities that "rely on flattened understandings of queerness, religion, and culture" (102). This strategic renegotiation of essentialized, static gender and sexuality categories challenges the very premise of the visibility at the core of fractal orientalist representations of LGBT experiences in Beirut. Moussawi's interlocutors employ relational visibilities, such as "signaling" sexuality to others without explicitly stating it, based on vulnerabilities and senses of safety (119). Or they suspend al-wad' through "bubbles," temporal spaces of solace for kinship, solidarity, and support. These bubbles constitute spaces of community based on a multiplicity of identities that embrace political alignments, such as Palestinian solidarity—or even linguistic connections to speak Armenian—rather than spaces exclusive to expressions of gender or sexual identities.Moussawi's deft analysis dismantles the exclusionary logics in representations of LGBT experiences in Beirut. However, the text is sharpest when weaving together the embodied experiences of LGBT interlocutors who resist and renegotiate the terms of intelligibility imposed by neoliberal interpretations of "appropriate queerness" (71). *Disruptive Situations* will have wide appeal across queer and sexuality studies, queer theory, urban studies, sociology, postcolonial theory (or more broadly colonial studies), and Middle East studies. Scholars will glean valuable theoretical tools that enable the reworking of conceptual limitations across disciplines. While Moussawi concludes that the queer strategies and tactics of the LGBT interlocutors have purchase across the Global South, these everday strategies of navigating al-wad' find resonance with the everyday strategies of navigating the sedimented histories of anti-Black and homophobic violence that pervade the institutions and streets of Louisville as much as in London or Cairo. Indeed, considering the current moment of COVID-19, ongoing racial and homophobic violence, and the corruption that led to Beirut's August 4, 2020 explosion, Moussawi's intervention feels both prescient and urgent.

Notes

1. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). ↩

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Review of *Being Property Once Myself: Blackness and the End of Man* by Joshua Bennett (Harvard University Press)

by Sohum Pal | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT Reading a robust archive of twentieth and twenty-first century African-American literature, Joshua Bennett's *Being Property Once Myself: Blackness and the End of Man* lays the foundations for rethinking kinship and relation between humans and animals.

KEYWORDS animal studies, Black studies, ecocriticism, literature

Being Property Once Myself: Blackness and the End of Man. By Joshua Bennett. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020, 224 pp. (hardcover). ISBN 978-0-6749-8030-3. US List: $35.00.

Joshua Bennett's *Being Property Once Myself: Blackness and the End of Man* takes as its point of departure Frederick Douglass' injunction—in Douglass' autobiography and in later writings—for "recently emancipated black farmers…to consider animals their co-laborers, friends, partners in the field, to resist the whims of a social order predicated on their confinement" (3). That "their confinement" lacks a clear grammatical antecedent is precisely the point: in Douglass's vision, as in Bennett's, Black confinement and animal confinement are of the same genre. Over six chapters—"Horse," "Rat," "Cock," "Mule," "Dog," and "Shark"—Bennett works to "abolish the forms of anti-Black thought that have maintained the fissure between human and animal," and to illuminate the animal in Black American literature as a figure who promises "nothing short of another cosmos" (4).

Following the introductory engagement with Douglass in "Horse," Bennett proceeds to take up twentieth-century works. In the first chapter, "Rat," Bennett spends considerable time clearing away earlier criticism that seeks to equate animal life—and Black life—with hopelessness and social death in Richard Wright's poetry and the novel *Native Son*. Bennett quotes James Smethhurst and Sam Bluefarb, offering historiographic context to animal-centered critique of *Native Son*, but suggests that earlier critics have relied on "a depiction of black social life broadly construed that evacuates all potential for flourishing due to material conditions, a logic by which the 'ghetto' that both Smethurst and Bluefarb invoke comes to serve as a zone of no return, a space in which nothing grows or grieves" (46). By contrast, Bennett sees the rat not as signifying bare life so much as life of an alternative order, modes of relationality and dignity-making that cannot be evident in a white world. This is, as Bennett suggests, the continuous thread of his study—readings that "account for the fugitivity that is immanent" in the figures of twentieth century African American literature, "even and especially when they are under extreme duress" (64).

Bennett's chapters each proceed by highlighting how the eponymous animal serves as an opening to another world and an invitation to rethinking the conditions of Black life. Along the way, Bennett expands on related questions: in "Cock," Bennett pairs Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* with the infamous Moynihan Report, assessing the different metaphors that pass for wisdom in describing the lives of Black men. The flightless, though noble, white (pea)cock in *Song of Solomon* walks with "an airborne strut that conveys pride while also operating as a performance of irreparable limitation," suggests Bennett; the peacock's whiteness indicates that the transcendence is no more possible for white men than it is for Black men (97). The following chapter, "Mule," offers a similar analytical frame for the labor, lives, and vulnerability of Black women, contending that "Muleness is inextricably linked to this sort of routine violation: the taken-for-granted suffering that occurs beyond the power or purview of social accountability" (117). In conversation with Hortense Spillers's "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," Bennett reads the violence committed against the mule in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as "vestibular" to America's culture of violence against Black women. At the same time, Bennet highlights how Spillers's "vestibular" indexes "myriad social possibilities that the flesh makes available to us, possibilities that the body cannot contain or condone," and offers a nexus for gathering human and animal subjects, for acknowledging the entanglement of human and non-human life, and for toppling the present species hierarchy (124). Inasmuch as these two chapters serve as Bennett's primary avenue of considering gender and ability, they do leave this reader somewhat wanting—Bennett glosses "the social model of disability" briefly, and primarily to foreclose a disability studies reading in his analysis of *Song of Solomon*. Nonetheless, the themes of capacity, gender, labor, and even the deathways Bennett writes of in "Mule" are rich potential areas for scholars of critical disability studies, ecocriticism, and animality to engage with Bennett's work going forward. After all, animals have historically offered an entrée into understanding ability.[1]

The fifth chapter, "Dog," looks to Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* and Carl Phillips' poem "White Dog" to unsettle the master-dog relationship, to gesture to "an open relation that accounts for the dog's deep interiority," and moves away from "obedience" toward a more mutual recognition of human and dog willfulness (146). The dog's "freedom is bound up with the will of the speaker but is not reducible to it," argues Bennett (147). Encouraging "a marring of [species] distinctions rooted in white-supremacist anthropocentrism," (154) Bennett suggests that in abandoning species boundaries, there is a "flourishing that exceeds the reach and restrictions of modernity" (168) both for animal life and Black life.

Yet if the most of the book gestures towards kinship among humans and animals, the final chapter "Shark" seems to make an entirely different kind of intervention. Instead, sharks—particularly in the historical context of the slave ship—figure ambivalently. Always an attendant threat on the open sea, sharks "function as a kind of specter, both an ever-looming threat to the flourishing of black life and a release valve, a guaranteed exit" (177). The shark, standing in for the ocean itself, proffers "both otherworldly despair and fugitive possibility—uncharted, undercommon marronage made possible by the opacity of the oceanic realm" (178). As "Shark" concludes the book, it offers an ambivalent conclusion—a simultaneous gesture to Black fugitivity and the impossibility of leaving behind a white supremacist world. Bennett leaves this ambivalence unresolved, making space to consider what it is about the shark that renders it a figure for which the "fissure" between it and the human cannot be bridged, as the remainder of the book offers. Nonetheless, with *Being Property Once Myself*, Bennett continues to write new ground in eco-criticism, and guides readers in generative directions within the broad project of mapping a Black ecopoetics.

Notes

1. See, for example, Sunaura Taylor,"Animal Crips" or Kelly Somers and Keren Soldatic, "Productive Bodies: How Neoliberalism Makes and Unmakes Disability in Human and Non-human Animals" in *Disability and Animality: Crip Perspectives in Critical Animal Studies,* eds. Stephanie Jenkins, Kelly S. Montford, and Chloë Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2020). ↩

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Review of *Robo Sapiens Japanicus: Robots, Gender, Family, and the Japanese Nation* by Jennifer Robertson (University of California Press)

by Sara Wenger | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT Jennifer Robertson's *Robo Sapiens Japanicus: Robots, Gender, Family, and the Japanese Nation* assesses the robot phenomenon in Japan within the last decade. Offering sustained critiques on contemporary techno-fix narratives, Robertson reveals how humanoid robots are designed and deployed to reify conservative values under the guise of technological advancements. Robertson's impressive ethnographic project weaves together robots of science fact and fiction, leaving readers to interrogate how humanoids, androids, gynoids, and cyborgs both challenge and reify existing social structures across the globe.

KEYWORDS ethnography, family, gender, human, Japan, robots, technology

Robo Sapiens Japanicus: Robots, Gender, Family, and the Japanese Nation. By Jennifer Robertson. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017, 280 pp. (hardcover) ISBN: 978-0-5202-8320-6. US List: $85.

In *Robo Sapiens Japanicus: Robots, Gender, Family, and the Japanese Nation*, Jennifer Robertson explores how robot technology operates in contemporary Japanese society. Specifically, Robertson argues humanoid robots are imagined, designed, and utilized in ways which reinforce traditional values and social structures. Robots, like other technologies, are anything but ideologically neutral—they are vastly complex, reflecting the desires of their human maker(s). Japan's robot dreams also require deep pockets to design and disperse, relying on state and corporate funding for their ongoing development. Thus, humanoid robots "both mirror and embody" state and corporate values, ideologies, and priorities which tend to reinforce the status quo (81). Robots, then, are not the solution that social elites believe them to be, bestowed with the ability to magically solve humanity's perceived problems, whether they be labor shortages, declining birth rates, unsavory effects of aging, or unhappy marriages. Through a wide array of examples, Robertson demonstrates how futuristic robot technologies are predominantly utilized to uphold and glorify conservatism. Robertson dubs this phenomenon "retro-tech," or the creation and propagation of advanced technology in the service of traditionalism (79).

From the outset, Robertson informs readers that *Robo Sapiens Japanicus* is neither an all-encompassing history of Japanese robotics nor a full-fledged critique of Japanese political administrations declaring robots as solutions to social, economic, and historical problems.

Instead, Robertson sets the text within a "spatiotemporal framework," conducting fieldwork and archival research on "robot-human coexistence in Japan and elsewhere at various times over the past decade" (29). Narratives on human-machine interactions from Japanese roboticists, politicians, corporations, and ordinary citizens are critically examined, unveiling the ideologically conservative discourses behind recent robotic initiatives. Innovation 25, Prime Minister Shinzō Abe's proposal to remake Japanese society by 2025, is one example of conservative techno-fixes imagined via advanced robotics. Abe's vision of a robotized society includes an illustration entitled "A Day in the Life of the Inobe Family," where human-robot coexistence is shown as the norm through the highly gendered labor of humanoid robots.

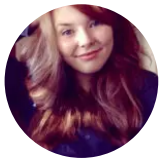
Throughout her text, Robertson expertly compares the robots of reality to those of fiction, demonstrating how non-fictional robots are less exciting and capable than their fantastic prototypes. Intricate machines once found at the center of science fiction stories appear woefully one-dimensional and archetypal in real life, upholding "existing affective and corporate frameworks" of the household and workplace (144). Robertson subsequently notes how robots are "good to imagine and dream about, but more difficult to build" (48). These difficulties lie at the heart of Robertson's ethnographic project: robots of *certain* imaginations—i.e., living in the minds of designers, marketers, politicians, and corporations—are wholly unextraordinary, falling short of popularized technological fantasies. Non-fictional robots reify existing social norms and values, giving way to traditional campaigns, marketing efforts, and public initiatives, further igniting false promises and "visionary scenarios of human-robot coexistence" (31).

As the text's subtitle suggests, issues related to gender and family serve as focal points for Robertson's analysis. Drawing on her extensive anthropological background, she highlights the ways in which Japan's robot revolution is not revolutionary at all. In "Families of Future Past" and "Embodiment and Gender," Robertson illustrates how both gender and family roles are continually influenced by the development of humanoid robots and vice versa. For example, Robertson discusses how male roboticists generally misunderstand the sex/gender system, further legitimizing gendered and sexualized divisions of labor which associate women with the household or private sphere. Even so-called "gender-neutral" robots are not free of these divisions, trapped in a material body that is almost always gendered in some way. Robertson's thorough analysis of both androids and gynoids—as well as the many variations therein—underscores her profound interest in the social relevance of robot technologies in Japan and beyond. In the penultimate chapter focused on cyborg-ableism, Robertson shows how and why disability-focused narratives, experiences, and expertise matter in robotics research. However, I believe Robertson's analysis of both gender and cyborg-ableism would have benefited from deeper engagements with contemporary scholars working on similar projects, including but not limited to cyborg theory, disability and technology studies, and sociocultural theories of technology.

In her conclusion, Robertson finds a way to leave readers hopeful without indulging in whimsical robot dreams. Readers trained or interested in anthropology, science and technology studies, or sociology will surely find Robertson's text satisfying, as well as scholars in the interdisciplinary fields of feminist science studies and cultural studies. Ultimately, Robertson's text is just as timely in 2021 as it was in 2017: Abe's call for a reinvented Japan by 2025 reflects similar robot narratives presented across the globe, including China's "Made in China 2025" plan and the United States' Department-of-Defense-funded Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing (ARM) consortium. If there is one

lesson to take away from Robertson's ethnographic project, it is the haunting realization that there are no readily-available techno-fixes for humanity's problems, whether they be in the form of household robots, carebots, or any other futuristic companions.

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Review of *Gestures of Concern* by Chris Ingraham (Duke University Press)

by Nicole Dib | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT Chris Ingraham's *Gestures of Concern* considers how affective communities can be built by and through concerned gestures. His analysis of the political power of a range of these gestures—from the small tokens of get-well cards to the political protests against shuttered public resources such as libraries—emphasizes their affect as much as their action. Ingraham pays attention to the background of concerned gestures that are political, aesthetic, and community-based, and his analysis of their efficacy and their impact draws readers to consider different kinds of critical resistance in the face of growing social disparities.

KEYWORDS aesthetics, affect theory, culture, political participation, politics

Gestures of Concern. By Chris Ingraham. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020, 264 pp. (paperback) ISBN: 978-1-4780-0951-1. US List: $26.95.

In Chris Ingraham's keen and hopeful *Gestures of Concern*, the titular gestures are the means by which people engage with public life. Ingraham analyzes the seeming inconsequence of various gestures to demonstrate that they are, in fact, affectively generative, and that they have the potential to create togetherness in the lives of increasingly marginalized and precarious subjects. These gestures prime us, Ingraham argues, for political change in order to help this change take hold. His work demonstrates how the daily, creative—and often unnoticed—work of building an "affective commonwealth," one of the ideas most heavily discussed in the book, can lead to positive political change for underserved communities in US and Western European contexts.

Despite the promises of contemporary participatory culture Ingraham outlines—the tweets, the Occupy movements, the posts that are part and parcel of social media—communicative participation in the world does not lessen the felt impact of the calamities and disparities that rage around us. One of the goals of Ingraham's study is to consider how concerned gestures are affectively generative and can help address feelings of exclusivity that are still present and growing despite the world's increasing connectivity through technology, social media, and participatory political culture. His keen emphasis on resisting the present (the very goal of critical theory) while affirming gestures as a way to cultivate "a sense of interdependence and connectivity" gives his study a cautious and qualified optimism (6). This very sense emerges in one of his most compelling concepts outlined in the introduction, that of the "affective commonwealth" which refers to "a shared sense of what it feels like to be alive at the present time, but as if that feeling were a resource anyone could draw on to make sense of their worlds and to affirm more sustainable ways of being interconnected within them" (5).

Ingraham's approach melds political theory, communication and media studies, and affect theory together with a dose of rhetorical concerns in three sets of paired chapters bookended by an introduction and an epilogue. Chapters one and two outline and discuss those foundational concepts of concern and gestures. Unlike physical gestures, what Ingraham calls "gestures of concern" are expressions in the form of an affective relation; these gestures can include language, gifts, artwork, etc., but, as his "Get Well" card example demonstrates, "what they share is an expressive concern that acts as both a means and as an end because their most instrumental effects are exhausted in their expressivity" (1). Ingraham is careful to frequently differentiate what gesture means for his book, in contrast to the more commonly associated bodily definition. Ingraham's gestures are best defined in the many examples he provides, ranging from the afore-mentioned "Get Well" card, to the act of saying *Gesundheit* when someone sneezes, and the "liking" of a post on social media. In the eventual turn to larger, often more community-based or communal gestures that Ingraham studies in the later chapters, his statement about the affective force of these gestures is particularly exigent: that this force "affirms a sense of something more intangible. Call it kinship, empathy, solidarity, kindness. In this book, I call it concern" (52).

In the book's second pairing of chapters, Ingraham troubles the divide between "art" and "real life" and points to the increasingly blurred lines between other social and aesthetic dichotomies including the virtual and actual, or the artist and audience. His greater argument in these chapters is that "attending to concerned gestures, along with the interplay of affective and symbolic orders, suits the dynamics of a contemporary culturescape that finds citizen artists and critics working in tandem, but also in tension" (80). The strength of Ingraham's discussion is his consistently balanced survey of how such divides emerged and remain today (including the divide between professional and amateur artist, for example, and the gap between public and private). There is a balance between a history of aesthetics and artistic reception coupled with Ingraham's own theoretical contribution in the form of his attention to concerned gestures; in these paired chapters on art and artists, this approach covers topics ranging from curatorship to algorithmic culture's effect on artistic production. This balance makes Ingraham's work especially helpful for readers who want significant analysis of contemporary topics in artistic and cultural production along with a discussion of the affective results of technological changes in art. Ingraham's discussion of the participatory nature of Goodreads, for example, blends his theoretical interest in affect and identification with a fascinating reading of the potentially harmful results of algorithmic participation on authors featured on the website.

In what feels like Ingraham's most optimistic final pairing, chapters five and six turn to the building of affective commonwealths which have the potential to contribute to "a shared attunement and response-ability to one another" (131). This hopeful sense comes from Ingraham's analysis of an especially heartbreaking example of the impact of concerned publics: public library closures proposed and enacted in various British cities around 2010. Linking the peril of public libraries in the United Kingdom to other practices of social exclusion in Europe, Ingraham studies performative acts of resistance including a "Wall of Shame" in the London Borough of Brent that reproached the Brent Council's decision to close their libraries, as well as a pop-up library built and staffed by ordinary citizens. The pop-up library in particular exemplifies the significance of Ingraham's own theory of concerned gestures by ordinary citizens: "affirming a *sense* of community in this is what creates, again and again, an actual community" (159, emphasis in original). Calling attention to these acts of artistic, cultural, and political creation demonstrate the impact of

participation itself, even and especially in venues that are less visible, publicized, or professionalized.

Ingraham's wide-ranging engagement with rhetoric, artistic production, political engagement, and participatory culture makes his book of interest to those readers attracted to an interdisciplinary approach to cultural studies. For readers interested in literary studies, there are ample moments where Ingraham's cultural studies approach is bolstered by deeply detailed close readings. The book's epilogue demonstrates this approach, as it engages with the poet W.H. Auden's 1962 essay entitled "The Poet and the City" through a set of close readings and innovative rebuttals regarding Auden's own concern about the forces preventing artists from pursuing their work. Ingraham walks through four of Auden's beliefs in connection to this problem and provides his own Anthropocene-minded modifications. Auden's argument that "the loss of belief in the eternity of the physical universe" could be a reason for an artistic slowdown, for example, is modified by Ingraham's own assertion that "[a] growing belief in the physical universe's power to outlast the human" has raised the stakes for artistic and political intervention (188–189). Closing his book with this series of challenges to political, communicative, artistic, and, of course, gestural engagement with the world continues to model the reading practice that Ingraham had been demonstrating throughout *Gestures of Concern*, one that defines the world in practices of care and concerned gestures.

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Nicole Dib is an Assistant Professor in the English department at Southern Utah University. She specializes in contemporary American literature, comparative ethnic approaches to literary studies, critical race studies, and road-trip narratives. Her teaching and research intersect several fields in the humanities, drawing from literary studies, cultural studies, mobility studies, and ethnic studies. Her scholarly work appears or is forthcoming in *MELUS: Multiethnic Literature of the United States*, *Feminism and Comics: New Essays on Interpretation*, *The Routledge Companion to Critical Masculinity Studies*, and *Teaching the Classics in the US Prison System*.

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